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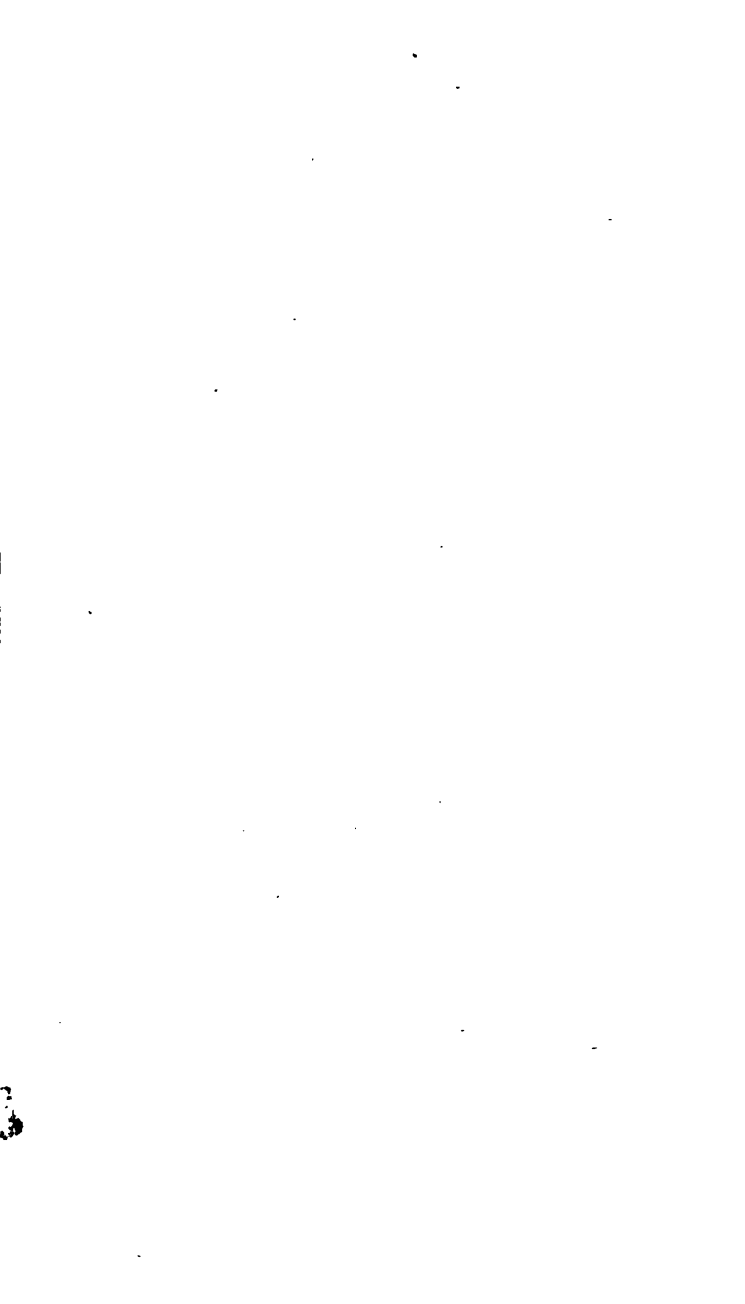
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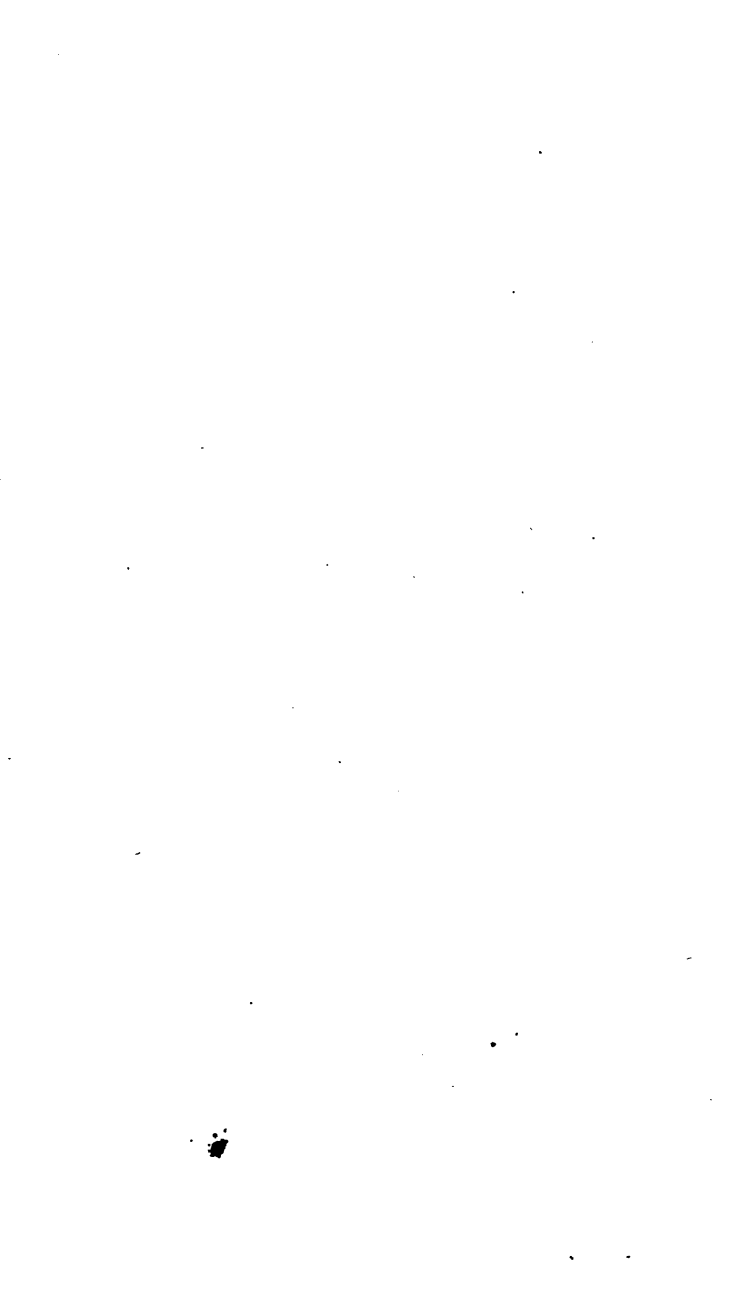
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Bit from Alan Keene

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ALICIA DE LACÝ;

AN

HISTORICAL ROMANCE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "THE LOYALISTS," &c.

Wisdom in sable garb array'd,
Immers'd in rapturous thought profound,
And Melancholy, silent maid,
With leaden eye that loves the ground,
Still on thy solemn steps attend :
Warm Charity, the general friend,
With Justice, to herself severe,
And Pity, dropping soft the sadly-pleasing tear.

Gray's Ode to Adversity.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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IT was suggested to the Author of "The Loyalists," soon after the publication of that work, that where the plan of combining history with fiction was adopted, it was better to date the story in those remote times, the transactions of which not being minutely recorded, would admit the introduction of ideal circumstances. It was further hinted, that the manners of romance were more calculated for such a mixture of fable and reality than those which are appropriated to the modern novel. In deference to the judgment of those who have the best opportunities of knowing the public taste, these suggestions have been in the present instance at-

tended to; but the work commenced under many disadvantages. Beside some, which, if stated, might suggest the inquiry why it was undertaken at all, the necessity of gaining whatever information could be collected concerning the period treated of, has subjected the author to much dry reading, which has, perhaps, operated as a check upon the imagination, already circumscribed by having chosen a conspicuous personage for the leading character. Another difficulty originated in being perhaps too scrupulously solicitous of limiting the departures from history to the introduction of supposed occurrences, without disguising well-known facts, or misrepresenting those persons who have acted a distinguished part on the theatre of life. If it be asked why, in the full perception of these difficulties, a real personage was chosen for the hero? the answer is, because a greater degree of interest may obviously be excited for such

a character than for one wholly imaginary. Whatever objections may be made (and certainly there are many) against the lawfulness of thus bringing out an old worthy in masquerade, it is presumed they will not be strongly urged by the admirers of Shakespeare's historical plays; or of Marmion, the Lady of the Lake, and many other justly popular poems; or even of the epics of Homer and Virgil, which have delighted every age, by giving enlarged portraits of those whose miniatures only were exhibited by history. It may surely then be premised, that the majority will, from principle, warmly defend this licence as claimed by poetry, and by these the prose fabulist may probably be heard with favour, while urging a claim to the same liberty of building fiction on the basis of truth, and making past heroes and heroines talk in the language of common life, as they have long been allowed to do

in couplets and blank verse. This liberty must however depend on the keeping of character being properly observed; for certainly real personages, as far as their qualities and actions are clearly known and generally admitted, should have their likenesses retained with fidelity in every fabulous adventure in which they are introduced; especially if they have acquired much historical celebrity.

Beside this homage to identity, which is due to the real personages of former times, the manners and *costume* of those times should be attended to, as far as they are ascertained. By giving to a hero of the dark ages the improved taste, the liberal sentiments, the refined benevolence, or the enlarged policy of the present day, we may please those who read without reflection; but surely critical acumen will scrutinize our labours as it would a picture, which should exhibit the contending goddesses of Mount Ida assembled at

a card-table, and Paris looking at them through an opera-glass. Historical verity is equally violated by the philosophizing, generous, placable heroes of Ossian, to whom, in an age and country of savage barbarism, a gentleness of character and an elevation of sentiment are ascribed, which we shall in vain seek in the most improved periods of moral civilization. And it may be worth while to divest ourselves of national prejudice, and ask if those novelists have been correct who have copied the portraits of their feudal barons from those amorous knights whom a taste, formed on the soft Italian model at the revival of literature, introduced as the courtiers of Arthur and Charlemagne, many ages after the knights of the Round Table and the warlike Paladins had mouldered into dust.

History describes the English barons of the era of the Plantagenets as chiefly characterized by a strong passion for free-

dom, or rather for the maintenance of their own independence and privileges; a scrupulous attention to the forms of religion, combined with disdain of papal usurpations, and, it must be added, little observance of that spirit of charity and forbearance, which we rightly consider as the essential fruits of piety; invincible hardness, inflexible pride, cherished enmity, impatience of superiority, and disregard of the lives or the feelings of those vassals whom they alternately defended as their property, or sacrificed to their ambition. To these qualities must be added the lofty manners of chivalry, and a tenacious regard to an erroneous principle of honour, to which the tender feelings, and sometimes also the vindictive passions, were made subordinate. We have few data by which we can judge of their private lives; but reasoning from what we do know, we must conclude this compound could never make refined

lovers nor very tender husbands. Is it not probable that, like all his other passions, the love of the English baron was impetuous, determined, and arbitrary, though sincere and constant? The manners of chivalry were dignified rather than supplicatory. He who ran a tilt for his lady's heart would not consider the woman whom he won by his lance as possessed of a superiority over a lover who, by his mode of courtship, shewed her weakness and his power of defending her. If in these times of comparative justice and decorum the weaker sex looks up to man for protection, what must it have done when law, scarce defined and often interpreted by partial or inadequate judges, found its feeble operations suspended or impeded by the contentions of barons opposed to each other; by the predatory attacks of powerful bands of outlaws; by contests between the King and his peers; or by foreign invasions?

In such a state of society, woman could not assert the empire of beauty ; and a reference to the cotemporary chroniclers exhibits her chiefly as the owner or defender of castles : in the one instance as an object of competition, in the other of admiration ; as passing her youth in a convent, till marriage gave her a protector ; and as seeking the same place of refuge when widowhood left her destitute. . If she appears in the diversions of the age, let it be remembered that those diversions were chiefly of a martial and athletic kind. . Women so circumstanced and so amused were as little likely to be won by the refinements of modern sentiment, as their lovers were unsuited to that style of courtship. .

In what is confessedly a new attempt, an often-favoured author approaches the bar of public taste with the fears of an adventurer in an unknown department of literature, and solicits indulgence rather

than anticipates celebrity. Unconscious of those self-supported claims which can give a new impetus to public taste, the lovers in the following pages are only a little less absorbed by the tender passion than their cotemporaries in circulating-libraries usually are. The professed antiquary will often find the author tripping; and she craves his mercy by saying, that in this attempt to exhibit a resemblance of past ages, she has taken considerable pains to avoid misleading the general reader, but does not hope she can stand the scrutiny of the deeply learned. There is a distinction between erudition and those violations of historical facts and erroneous associations of times and habits, which shock our preconceived ideas of men and manners.

The character of the hero having been left ambiguous by contradictory statements, the author felt at liberty to assign him such motives of action as best suited

her plan. The heroine's is re-cast ; for which deviation from the author's own rules she pleads, that though Aliciade Lacy was a real personage, little is said of her ; and the extraordinary conduct by which alone her name is saved from oblivion, is made to suit her imaginary likeness, by a fiction which, though romantic, the annals of those times shews to be not improbable. It is hoped that the historical notices subjoined will not be considered as an affectation of reading, which, in an age of such general information, would be at once presumptuous and ridiculous. They are designed to save the enlightened reader the trouble of reference, and to prevent the juvenile one from so confounding the Lancaster of romance and the Lancaster of history, as to become as warm an advocate for the purity of his motives, as was the female Quixote for the decorum of the Empress Julia.

It is hoped that a delineation of the

different effects of prosperity and adversity on a well-intentioned but infirm mind, may produce some moral impression, especially on those whom parental indulgence or the flattery of inferiors has induced to rank themselves too high in the scale of intellectual being. A precautionary hint is also given to thoughtless beauty, to deter her from considering domestic happiness as a toy, which she may toss away and regain at pleasure.

Enough having been said in the character of Prologue "to insinuate the plot into the boxes," it is time Bayes should retreat, and order the *Dramatis Personæ* on the stage.

March 7th, 1814.



ALICIA DE LACY.

CHAPTER I.

How many a chief, whose busy mind
Convuls'd this earthy scene,
Has sunk forgotten by mankind,
As tho' he ne'er had been,

PEACOCK'S GENIUS OF THAMES.

“ **I**F ever Fortune, in one of her sorry humours, takes it into her head to make me a great man, I'll not give up my hounds and hawks for any king in christendom. Tell me of the pleasure of sitting in parliament among bishops and abbots: there's nothing like following a pack of well-bred beagles, or flying a Norway falcon at her quarry in a clear frosty morning. Were I Earl of Lincoln, as my master is, I would let

England take care of itself, and have mummers and morrice-dancers at Christmas, May-games and wassailings at their proper seasons, and go to mass just when I liked it ; and if every body went on the same way, and only took care of their honest selves, there would not be so much grumbling and grieving, and England would be quite as well managed."

Such were the reflections of Humphrey Lackington, master of the beagles to Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln, one of the most potent barons in the early part of the reign of Edward the Second. The indignation of honest Humphrey had been awakened by his lord's abrupt departure from Pontefract castle, just at the commencement of the season for field sports. The mortification of the assiduous huntsman who had taken peculiar pains to provide the best diversion for his lord, did not arise from considering the unhappy state of England, at

once torn with private factions, and degraded in the eyes of foreign nations, by the misrule of a weak, voluptuous prince, who was subjected to the domination of an unworthy favourite. Humphrey did not interfere with politics : educated in the simple notion that if every one mended one, the world would need no further improving, he proceeded steadily in the path of his duty, convinced that the same principle which made the affairs of private families go on quietly and respectably, might regulate the government of empires. He was never out of humour, but when, according to his own phrase, he had been chasing a wild bull up labour-in-vain hill ; and his present discontent proceeded from the conviction that neither the Percys, nor the Warrens, nor any other northern baron could shew in their kennels, stables, or falconries, hounds, steeds, or hawks equal to his lord, whose triumphs in

the peaceful as well as the hostile field, Humphrey enjoyed with all the zeal of an ancient dependant who felt his honour and prosperity identified with his master's. 'Tis true he loved his country well enough to follow the banner of De Lacy at every military array, from an assurance that it marked the path to her security and glory: yet he silently wondered how kings and great men so continually fell out about what he could not understand, and therefore supposed, must be of little consequence. Had Fortune bound his brow with an earl's coronet, he knew his chief pleasures would result from animal indulgences and athletic diversions, and he was astonished that a person who could fill his cup to the brim, and reign paramount over an host of vassals, could be drawn from the fortress where he exercised princely power, by any cause save to revenge an insult, or to preserve his lands from a Scottish incursion.

Humphrey was not formed to look into futurity : the prospective dangers resulting from violated laws, the agonized feelings of a patriot anticipating the degradation of his country, lately raised by a wise and valiant monarch to an unexampled degree of proud pre-eminence, entered not into his catalogue of human miseries. Convinced that every thing went on well enough if people would but let the world alone, he watched, with deep regret, the glittering battle-axes of the armed retinue that attended his lord, steadily pursuing their course toward Doncaster, on their way to join the discontented barons then assembled at Ware, to specify their grievances, and state their demands, previous to their attending a tournament at Wallingford, that had been proclaimed by the King to celebrate the return of Gaveston, and his achievements in Ireland.

The private history of the house of

De Lacy is so connected with public transactions, that we must here recall to the reader's memory the extraordinary ascendancy which Pierce Gaveston, a handsome, lively, brave, accomplished, but unprincipled, frivolous, and ambitious Gascon, had obtained over the indolent heir of the renowned Edward the First. Like his illustrious descendant, Harry of Monmouth, Edward of Carnarvon had been led by the dissolute companions of his youth, into unprincely extravagant actions, but unlike "King Hal, that royal imp of fame," the errors of the stripling adhered to the man, and the sovereign seemed to reign less for the benefit of his people than for the enrichment and gratification of the dissolute cabal by whom he had been seduced and degraded. For the trespass of breaking into the park, and killing the deer of the Bishop of Litchfield, Edward, while Prince of Wales, had been committed to

prison by the intrepid judges of his inflexible father, who not only prohibited the course of justice from being interrupted in his son's favour, but sentenced his associates, and particularly Gaveston, his prime seducer, to perpetual banishment. On his death-bed, among other solemn injunctions, the late King commanded his successor never to recall a man whom experience proved to possess a sovereign sway over his inclinations, and who had perverted the heart whose natural propensities were good and amiable, had they been united to a better understanding, or happily placed under the control of a more determined will. To insure a point on which the dying King foresaw that the future welfare of the kingdom depended, he obliged several of the principal barons to swear they would resist Gaveston's recall to court. Vain were all these precautions : before the hallowed remains of the great Edward rested with

his ancestors, Gaveston returned, not privately, but, as it were, in triumph over all that was respectable in England; over the breathless warrior who had interdicted him from setting his foot in the land he had, when living, governed with wisdom and glory; over those fundamental laws which forbade to a foreigner the power and emoluments that Gaveston had the audacity to demand; over public opinion, which was decidedly hostile to the corrupter of the young Prince; over the honour of the nobles bound by solemn injunctions to resist his return; and, lastly, over the filial piety and reputation of his unfortunate besotted patron.

Nor had banishment (though attended by so many ignominious circumstances that it might have been called transportation) altered the character of Gaveston. Gay, young, vain and impetuous, he forgot the lessons adversity taught during some

years of mortification and shame. His friend had now ascended the throne ; and in the reign of a monarch only twenty-two years of age, he foresaw a long festival of pleasure, and a rich harvest of honours and profits. Proud of his influence over a prince who publicly met him on his return, embraced him, and immediately appointed him to those high offices which were part of the chartered rights of several antient barons, Gaveston insulted the high-minded, warlike, but rough unlettered nobles who formed the hereditary guardians of the throne of England. Contempt was a mode of treatment to which these powerful peers were unaccustomed. Even the warlike Edward, highly respectable as his great victories and fine qualities made him to his subjects, never permitted the warmth of his temper to hurry him into unguarded language to any of his peers, without repenting the imprudent sally, and endea-

vouring to heal the breach by speedy conciliation. Insult from a foreigner, a Gascon, a demi-Frenchman, a person so inferior to themselves in birth, that it was doubtful whether his father had ever been allowed to wear the spurs of honour, while it was known that his mother had been degraded by a judicial accusation of sorcery, was intolerable to the Lacys, the Bohuns, the Fitzallans, and the Warrens of old times. Many of these boasted that the blood of antient kings ran in their veins, others were royally allied, having married the nieces, sisters, or daughters of monarchs. Edward of Carnarvon found, at the commencement of his reign, that he must either again part with Gaveston, or expose the nation to the horrors of civil war. The sceptre of peace was a burden to his indolent hand, and it was wholly unfit to grasp the warrior's truncheon. A compromise was therefore soon adopted, and Gaveston was sent into

Ireland, where he was permitted to exercise sovereign authority, and for a time was serviceable in subduing the rebellious by his bravery, and introducing the refinements of polished life among the rude natives.

But the toils of honourable ambition could not long occupy a perverted mind, which languished for the pleasures of a court, and the ease and enjoyment annexed to a residence in a country where the habits of society were formed, and established laws rendered persons and property comparatively secure. Neither absence, nor the beauty and graces of Isabella of France, his young queen, had alienated the heart of Edward from his favourite ; he soon recalled him, and under the offensive pretext of rewarding his services, he was so imprudent as to espouse him to his niece the Princess of Gloucester, and to institute a tournament in honour of his marriage and return ;

absurdly hoping, that in the hurry of preparation, and the zest of martial competition, the barons would overlook the presence of the man, who they had sworn should remain in exile, the impertinent who had personally offended them, the seducer of their present prince, and the unprincipled debauchee, whom their late sovereign had pointed out with the severity of perpetual malediction.

Such were the circumstances which drew the Earl of Lincoln from his castle. Few noblemen had a larger interest in the welfare of the nation, thus endangered by the folly and caprice of the King, and the presumption and audacity of his favourite. Beside the earldom of Lincoln, and its dependant lands and castles which he possessed in his own right, his wife, the Lady Margaret, was granddaughter and heiress of William Longspee, Earl of Salisbury, grandson of Henry the second, and the beautiful un-

happily celebrated Rosamond Clifford. On her mother's side Margaret claimed her descent from those mighty Earls of Chester, whom William of Normandy fixed as counts palatine in that province, to resist the incursions of the Welsh, and endowed with powers more nearly approaching to royalty than any other of his barons. The marriage of the Earl and Countess of Lincoln had been productive of a numerous issue; but the sons had successively withered and fallen from their parent stock: one male heir alone remained, a boy of ten years of age, the only individual who prevented the three united earldoms from becoming the dowry of their daughter the Lady Alicia, who had just completed the age of eighteen.

To preserve this son the Countess of Lincoln adopted those precautions which her own character and the superstitions of that age suggested. Beside placing

every guard which the most watchful anxiety could prompt around the darling youth, she wearied herself by a continual round of devotional exercises. Her piety was both active and passive, stimulating her to pilgrimages and offerings at the shrine of every saint whom she believed possessed influence in heaven, on account of some miracle lately wrought in favour of a faithful suppliant, and also to founding chauntries for priests, and receiving palmers and crusaders with a liberal hospitality, to which the ascetic severity of her own life was a marked contrast. She constantly wore sackcloth under her robes of state, fasted till nature almost sunk under continued privations, told her beads with unswerving punctuality, and attended the distribution of the daily largesses bestowed at her gates on mendicants of all descriptions. Sir William of Walsingham, the lovely boy for whom these her cares and good works were to

procure length of days and prosperity, was no ordinary child; beside having that premature acuteness and ripeness of intellect which falls to the share of all children who are born to splendid prospects, and which (as in the present times) were attested by sagacious dependants, and credited by doating parents, this heir of the houses of Lacy and Longspee had been given to the prayers of his mother by our Lady of Walsingham, near to whose miraculous image he was born on the vigil of Saint Nicholas, the protector of children. A combination of such wonderful circumstances inconceivably endeared him to the superstitious Countess, who, solely devoted to his preservation, left her only daughter to accompany her father in his field sports, or to waste her leisure in the dangerous society of mercenary, low-minded dependants, listening to their designing flattery, or studying those false allurements by which capricious beauty

tries to improve the masterly work of nature, though the bounteous goddess, alike intelligent and revengeful, always contrives that the fantastic grace, thus surreptitiously introduced, shall obscure or destroy some portion of native loveliness. The beauty of Alicia de Lacy was of that description, which, whenever it appears, commands admiration. It was also accompanied by those intuitive graces which render a fine form irresistible, and every accomplishment the age afforded was her own. Native genius supplied the want of study, to which in truth her volatile genius would not have easily submitted; nor were the inherent qualities of her understanding and heart inferior to the choice workmanship of the external casket; and had the same pains been taken to cultivate and improve, as were unfortunately employed to corrode and canker them, by vanity, caprice, and self-love, a poet would almost have been

justified in rating her value at the price of "a world made up of one entire and perfect chrysolite." Still she continued lovely; bewitchingly though fantastically gay; the happy child of prosperous fortune; the darling of her doating father, who lavishly indulged all her desires; the theme of every travelling minstrel, and the amoret of every son of chivalry whom the Earl of Lincoln entertained in his castles.

Lady Margaret saw nothing in this blooming efflorescence of sportive nature, but a creature lost in the pleasures of sense, and devoted to a world which would soon mortally sting the heart which its fascinations had corrupted. Had her own inclinations been gratified, she would herself have passed her days in a cloister; for she had witnessed the solemn ceremony of the young Princess Mary, daughter to Edward the First, and thirteen other ladies of noble birth, taking

the veil, at the same time, in the monastery of Amesbury, to which Eleanora of Provence, widow of Henry the Third, had long ago retired. The affecting sight of a princess renouncing all sub-lunary delights, disrobing her person of every vestige of earthly pomp, meekly severing from her brow those graceful tresses, at once the ornament and shade of loveliness, breaking from the arms of the mighty King of England, her affectionate father, and bidding an eternal adieu to that world in which she had found nothing but pleasure and admiration; consecrating her future days to lonely piety and silent contemplation; while her aged grandmother, exulting at the voluntary sacrifice, called the fair victim, and her attendant votresses, to find with her that peace and resignation in a cell which a court could not afford: this singular and affecting scene, combined with the solemn music, and mag-

nificent display, by which the church of Rome elevates the devotion, and disperses the sighs of professed recluses, so wrought on the sombre mind of Lady Margaret, that she resolved to imitate the example she so passionately admired. The death of her only brother proved an insurmountable obstacle to her design ; she was now no longer an individual responsible only to herself for her conduct, but the medium by which the combined inheritances of the Earls of Salisbury and Chester must be conveyed to posterity ; marriage, therefore, was to her a necessary sacrament, and she entered into that estate, with the hope of having daughters, whom she might, in her stead, consecrate to heaven. It was, therefore, grievously adverse to her wishes, that her lord, to heal an ancient feud between their houses, betrothed his Alicia, at the early age of nine years, to John Earl of Warren and Surrey, the grandson and heir of that

potent baron, who had more than once made the late King retrace the steps that seemed to lead to the establishment of a despotic government.

CHAP. II.

Old men and beldams in the streets
Do prophesy upon it dangerously.

SHAKESPEARE.

WE must now return to Humphrey Lackington, whom we left in wrathful dudgeon at his lord's unexpected departure, shaking his head in significant condolence at those irrational objects of his care, who he believed sympathized in his disappointment; and feeling his occupation gone as well as theirs, Humphrey left the stable-yard, and wandered into the forsaken guard-room, not without hope of finding sufficient remains of the parting feast to raise his dejected spirits, and enable him to endure the combined evils of solitude and inaction. Having succeeded in filling his can,

he raked up the glowing embers that were scattered on the ample hearth, and sat down to indulge his splenetic regrets, to which the present silence, contrasted with the noisy merriment usually prevalent in that apartment, was singularly propitious.

But silence was soon scared away by the appearance of one of its most irreconcilable adversaries, Mabel Peverell, the venerable nurse of Lady Margaret. The private chronicles of the De Lacy family have never been subjected to mortal eyes, till happily rescued from obscurity by the writer of this narrative, who begs leave to blend them, as often as occasion requires, with testimony more universally known and accredited: these faithful registers speak largely of the fidelity, obedience, and other virtues of this aged dependant. From some circumstances, however, it may be inferred, that though a devotee, she was not of the Carthusian order, a

cheerful repast and a long story had peculiar claims to her favour; good humour smoothed the ravages of time in her countenance, and benevolence prevented his icy hand from congealing her heart.

Beside these perhaps singular excellences, she possessed the usual properties of uneducated old age. Not only did she dive into futurity with Sybil-like precision, but her supernatural discernment enabled her to discover a hidden mystery in passing events, impervious to any but her "gifted eye;" and though continually wrong in her predictions and discoveries, she still required that her oracular guesses should be received with implicit deference. Such was the good old nurse who joined Humphrey in the guard-room, and after reproving him for finding fault with any thing his lord chose to do, she informed him that she had found out the real motive for his

hasty departure. The medium of this discovery was a dream with which she had been favoured by Saint Audrey. She had repeated ten Paternosters and fifty Ave-Maries that her dear Lady Alicia might have a good husband instead of Lord Surrey, whom she did not like, and at last the gracious Saint had shewn her the man, who would discover himself to the Lord Lincoln, at the tournament at Wallingford. His name was not vouchsafed, but the lilies on his coat of mail pointed him out to be no other than the Duke of Normandy, brother to Queen Isabella, and heir to the crown of France.

Humphrey's impatience now got the better of his politeness, and he told his companion she dealt in as many falsehoods as an Iceland story-teller. The Lady Alicia was betrothed; and the Duke of Normandy had already got a wife; she must therefore pray again to

Saint Audrey for a dream more likely to be realized.

Mabel nodded her head significantly ; “ You are a faithless man, Humphrey,” said she, “ but I have seen stranger things come to pass in my day. If the Duke had an hundred wives, and each of them brought him a hundred kingdoms, it would be worth his while to get rid of them all to marry our sweet lady ; and as to her contract to the Lord Surrey, tell me nothing more of a man who never cares about the loveliest creature in all England, but flies around the country with wicked wantons, and lives near her father’s castle without coming to see how the rose of beauty opens, which he just consents to put in his bosom to secure the debatable lands that the Warrens and Lacies used to fight about.

“ ’Tis forty-and-six years Humphrey,” continued Mabel, “ since I was taken from my little cottage at Wimborn to

suckle Lady Margaret. Her mother died in child-bed, and they sought for a healthy nurse among their own vassals. I thought sore luck was my portion when they took me from my family, for my husband went with the great Earl William to the holy wars, where he was slain, and my baby died from neglect ; but Father Ambrose has told me that those who die fighting against Saracens go straight to paradise without passing through purgatory, and that my little Mabel is a cherub playing on a golden harp ; and so, long since I grew contented, and loved Lady Margaret as well as if she were my own daughter ; and a good lady she has been to me, providing me food and raiment in my old age, which perhaps I might have wanted if my husband and child had been alive."

Humphrey felt his ill humour gradually give way to the humble resignation of his companion. " 'Tis right in you to be contented ;" said he, " but I don't believe

Father Ambrose knows what passes in paradise, nor that he will ever get there to see."

"Hush, for your life," returned Mabel. "If the Father hears you, you will be whipped for a heretic; and though he is now gone with my lady to Saint Winifred's shrine, things come out so strangely, I do believe he has a familiar who tells him all that passes in the castle."

"He deals with the devil, I make no doubt," answered Humphrey; "and I have thought so ever since he ordered black Lent to be kept at the warder's table, and sent Lord Surrey's player-men to prison, because they came to act mysteries after Candlemas."

Mabel turned pale, crossed herself, and lifted up her hands, protesting against the impiety of finding fault with the Countess's ghostly father, though in her heart she joined in the huntsman's displeasure.

"I should be loth," said she, "to bear

testimony against thee, but 'tis a wise saying, 'when the church fears, walls have ears,' and before we open our minds to each other, let us look that there are no listeners crouching under the sumpter boards." A diligent search convinced Mabel that they had no corporeal witnesses ; and, to fortify their spirits against supernatural inquisitors, she proposed to replenish the can, while Humphrey laid on another faggot. The genial warmth inspired confidence ; the light blaze they were well assured drove off goblins and fairies ; and as copious a flood of detraction issued forth as ever circulated in steward's room or servants' hall. Humphrey confessed the incursions his lord allowed him to make on the manorial rights of his neighbours ; and Mabel, while she lamented the wearisome austerity of Lady Margaret, endeavoured to prove it a virtue, confessing it made all who approached her miserable, yet doubted not

she would hereafter be canonized as a saint. Lady Alicia was still allowed to be a sweet tempered creature, very generous, very affable, and only a little thoughtless. But after the principals were thus leniently treated, the remainder of the family exhibited a degrading assemblage of the worst specimens of human nature. Humphrey explained how his lord was pillaged in every department, but that which he superintended. Mabel deplored the idleness, extravagance, and coquetry of the damsels, so different from the happy propriety of young women in her early days, when, from mattins to vespers, every hand laboured for its master's profit, and not an eye wandered from its task, except to look at the holy rood, or sometimes at a lover.

“ Here,” said she, “ is Beatrice, daughter to the seneschal of Canford Castle ; she has gained the favour of Lady Alicia, and is more our mistress than her

ladyship. She dresses every day in cloth of gold, and puts precious stones in her hair, giving it out that her grandfather was a knight, when I know he was not worth half a hide of land. All our better born pages go in their holiday trim for her, and she tosses up her head; forsooth, and speaks to none of them, saying she will be a lady baroness. She is all for mirth and mummary, and never sets a stitch in the tapestry, except just when the Lady-countess is in the arras-room. Then there's Dorcas, her employ is making dumb cakes, and tying girdles round the bed-posts to dream of her sweet-heart, while I trot about from morning to night to keep every body honest, and prevent our being again disgraced as we were by that wicked Agatha."

Humphrey reminded Mabel that he was absent when that business broke out, and begged complete information.

"Mercy!" returned Mabel, "'tis a

long story, and will require more breath than I can well spare, and I must after the girls, whom I left dancing a galiard for joy that they have got the castle to themselves." Humphrey proposed to cut short the tale, but Mabel thought that to omit any circumstance would spoil it ; she therefore agreed, as it was a saint's day, to let the lasses divert themselves a little longer. The fire was again renewed, the can replenished, the hour-glass turned, and Mabel commenced her history. To relieve the fears of the reader, we will avoid the circumlocutions with which the old nurse thought fit to embellish the extraordinary incidents that attended the introduction and disgrace of Agatha, and relate whatever is important to this history with all possible brevity.

The exercises and privations of ascetic devotion were to a great degree hereditary in Lady Margaret's family, and they in some measure arose from a mis-

guided though pious wish to atone for the incontinence, and give rest to the troubled spirits of their royal ancestor and his ROSE OF THE WORLD. The grandfather of the Countess of Lincoln, imbibing a persuasion that nothing less than the dedication of his own life would be sufficient, took the cross, in opposition to the will of his sovereign, Henry the Third, and despising the threatened forfeiture of his estates, went to the holy land with St. Louis of France. He performed several astonishing acts of valour ; and at the battle of Damietta died defending the person of that prince, a little before he was taken prisoner by the Saracens. To have shed his blood in the defence of a christian king and canonized saint, on the consecrated soil of Palestine, and in the cause of religion, rendered the memory of this William Longspee peculiarly dear to his descendants. The family-minstrels composed ballads in his praise ; and every

incident respecting his adventures was noted in the domestic archives with a copious industry, more intent on collecting much, than on paying due respect to truth and probability. Among these circumstances was recorded the attachment of a fair Saracen who fell in love with the Earl, on seeing him from the walls of a city he was besieging, introduced herself to his tent as a page, and finally, (for the morals of crusaders were less strict than their manners,) bore him a son, whom the bloody infidels, as the issue of a blaspheming Frank, doomed to perish, with its miserable mother, in a cavern. The Earl of Salisbury, gaining information of this cruelty, hastened to the spot, with irresistible strength removed the stone that closed the entrance, penetrated the gloomy vault, and in its deepest recess discovered his mistress and her infant. He arrived too late to save life, for the spirits of both were on the wing, but in

time to administer the sacred rite of baptism. Collecting in his helmet the drops that trickled down the sides of the cavern, he sprinkled the faces of the expiring lady and her offspring, the former behaving like Tasso's Clorinda, on receiving the sacred rite from Tancred :

Soon as his lips pronounced the words of grace,
A smile celestial brightened on her face.

Clasping her babe to her bosom with one hand, she stretched the other to take a crucifix from her lover, and having kissed it, in token of obedience, expired. The grief and despair of Salisbury must be left to imagination. He had, however, what he conceived certain assurances of having performed an acceptable deed, for on the night previous to the battle in which he was slain, he saw a vision, disclosing to his view the Moorish lady and her son in glory.

Lady Margaret firmly believed this

legend, and in her orisons always remembered the soul of the fair Agatha, which was the baptismal name bestowed on the dying convert. It has already been mentioned, that it was her constant practice to attend the eleemosynary distributions at her gates. It chanced one day her attention was peculiarly attracted by a woman of foreign aspect and habit, who held an infant in her arms. Supposing her to be a pilgrim from a distant country, and therefore in need of more liberal aid, she called her to come near, and in the features of the child recognized those of her own Alicia. So extraordinary and complete was the resemblance, that she was persuaded it was a trick played to amuse her, nor would she, till her own daughter was shewn to her asleep in her cradle, be satisfied that it was only a likeness, and not the same.

On questioning the stranger, she told a romantic tale, fitted in every circum-

stance to work on the credulity and piety of Lady Margaret ; and to convince her that this girl was the issue of Agatha's son, supposed to have perished in the cavern with his mother, a long history was fabricated of the boy's preservation, a piece of a sword used by Earl William at Damietta was produced, together with a lock of his hair, and the very crucifix he had given to his expiring convert. Lady Margaret believed every syllable, embraced the infant, as a relique rescued from her grandfather's grave, and permitted the woman who brought it to depart, on the pretence of being bound by a vow to offer an oblation to Saint Cuthberg, the sacred protectress of the house of Longspee, as soon as she had delivered her charge to its representative.

Various were the opinions to which the introduction of this girl gave rise. Some with the Countess, believed it was brought by an angel, and so far the

opinion appeared plausible, as the stranger was never seen to kneel at the shrine of Saint Cuthberg, nor did any inhabitant of Wimborn or its vicinity meet a person who answered her description. There have been sceptics in all ages, and never, perhaps, were they more numerous than when a corrupted religion deemed it expedient to support an ambitious hierarchy by lying miracles. Several of the household, and the Earl of Lincoln himself, believed the tale to be the fabrication of an itinerant courtesan who wished to foist her illegitimate offspring on the protection of the charitable Countess. In confirmation of this opinion it was suggested that this woman, with a Moorish complexion, had English features, and that her language fell, rather affectedly than naturally, into a foreign idiom. A broken sword and a crucifix might easily be picked up, and these transmitted relics bore no other

mark of their belonging to the Earl of Salisbury than his initials, coarsely scratched, and evidently done by a workman too unskilful to be in the suite of the noble crusader. As to the lock of hair, though dipped in blood, it was no proof of identity. The only evidence worth regarding was the resemblance of the girl to Alicia, but this might be accidental, and testified no stronger claim to the Longspee than to the De Lacy family.

This opinion, accompanied by angry remonstrances, from the Earl to the Countess, at thus allowing herself to be the dupe of every impostor, did not deter her from fulfilling her resolution of educating this child as the descendant of her grandfather, and giving to her a portion of her hereditary possessions. Resistance being ineffectual, De Lacy yielded to the folly he could not correct, and the young Agatha became the chosen

companion of Lady Alicia, partaking of every instruction which the manners of the age afforded to women of the highest rank. Being considered as one of the family, she was admitted to a knowledge of all its secrets, was taught to rehearse the domestic legends, allowed to read the rent-rolls, converse with the vassals, assume the state, and exercise the authority of De Lacy's daughter.

“ A favourite has no friends.” Agatha's conduct was narrowly watched by all who secretly envied her greatness. As a stranger, she was an object of dislike to an household, composed, as was the case in feudal times, of remote kindred or hereditary retainers. Her beauty and talents rendered her still more obnoxious ; and Agatha, instead of adopting that conciliatory gentleness which might have disarmed malice, and changed hatred, at least, into endurance, triumphed in her good fortune, and boasted of be-

ing the dispenser of the Countess's favour. Every member of the family seemed bound in an implied contract, to overthrow her tyranny, to which act they believed themselves stimulated by their zeal for Lady Alicia, whom they supposed to be neglected for this renegade changeling. It was soon discovered that though punctual in every routine of prayer and penance, Agatha's private conduct did not correspond with her exterior strictness; an amour with one of the men at arms was detected, the fact of criminal levity brought home, and Lady Margaret, not less inflexible in her severity than warm in her attachments, felt no compassion for the frailty of seventeen, but rejected with high disdain the Earl's proposal to bestow a small dower and marry her to her seducer. Her sentence was a life of monastic seclusion in a nunnery of the strictest order, where she was to be treated as a guilty wretch,

and daily taunted with her crime. Such a doom to a young impassioned girl was sufficiently alarming, but the Countess spoke of a seven years' penance, which was to prepare her for this scene of holiness and peace. Its immediate nature she did not define, but she spoke of it as terrible; and Agatha was torn, wildly shrieking, from those knees which had often supported her with more than maternal fondness. The wretched girl, finding intreaty vain, summoned a spirit at once revengeful and impious, and breaking from her guard, tore from her bosom the supposed paternal crucifix which she had been permitted to wear as a relique; then invoking the sacred Being it commemorated, she denounced the Countess of Lincoln and all her descendants with the most diabolical maledictions, wishing she might descend to her grave without child or friend to close her eyes. Then, turning to the

terrified Alicia, who was brought to witness this scene as a warning against the indulgence of unwarrantable passions, she imprecated on her guiltless head every pang a wife or mother could feel. Having done this, she dashed the crucifix on the floor, and, smiling on her persecutor with that vindictive derision which spoke a mind capable of enduring and inflicting torment, submitted to her fate.

Such was the tale on which Mabel dilated with alternate pity, indignation, and horror. No one, she said, knew where the wretched girl was disposed, but the immediate effect of this scene on Lady Alicia's poignant feelings was alarming ; for some days her life was in danger, and the superstitious Countess, believing the malediction already operative, redoubled her prayers and works of piety, being assured by Father Ambrose, that this was the only way to mitigate its influence.

" 'Tis strange," said Humphrey, " they did not prefer forgiving the poor girl, and marrying her to her gallant, so making the best of a bad business. Had I been our Lady Countess, I would have made her turn her curses into blessings, and then sat down to a good dinner in comfort."

Mabel answered, " We people of low degree are no judges of what passes in the minds of high nobles: I have seen them when every one was trying to please them, and there was plenty of holiday cheer, and music, and mummers, and all the heart could desire; yet they were sighing, and scolding, and looking discontented, which makes me think they are somehow made of different kind of stuff, for they don't talk like us, or feel the same wants and wishes."

" That may be," replied Humphrey, " yet are they the same flesh and blood; and never were two roses more alike

than Agatha and our Lady Alicia ; I have often doffed my cap and bent my knee to one of them, and then the other has passed me laughing, and I knew not which was which.”

Mabel was indignant at a confession which she thought injurious to the superlative charms of her dear lady. “ Though I pity the poor girl,” said she, “ heaven pardon me if it is a sin, Agatha was no more to be compared to our lovely creature, than the moon at midnight to the sun at noon-day. ’Tis true, they were of the same size, and their voices and features were just alike ; and my Lady Margaret suffered her darling to wear embroidered mantles, and broaches, and jewels like Lady Alicia, who had a right to put them on, being a betrothed maiden. Yet, when you looked at their eyes, or watched their behaviour, you saw the difference. For one had a cunning, impudent leer, and the other was all open-

hearted kindness. I knew them by their step too. Bounce went Agatha, all pride and haughtiness, sweeping her train, and tossing her head like a peacock on a May-morning. Lightly glided sweet Alicia, just as one should fancy a gracious angel coming to cure a sick infant. It was only those who look at fine clothes and outward beauty, that did not know one from the other. I could distinguish them even by the air with which they passed the cup beyond my lord's board-end at the banquet, and spoke to the poor frightened vassals."

Humphrey now reverted to his favourite theme, the abuse of Father Ambrose, wondering how his reverence made it out that Agatha was worse than Rosamond Clifford, or the holy Lord Salisbury, whom he held in such high estimation. Mabel could give no other explanation than that poor people must not presume to imitate the actions of their superiors,

but content themselves with just doing their duty and holding their tongues. At the same time she drew an inference from Agatha's incontinence, that the Countess and Father Ambrose had discovered her to be an impostor, and therefore subjected to the severe jurisdiction that great feudal lords still exercised over their vassals, concluding with hoping that the pious Countess's prayers would keep all dangerous effects of this curse from the Lady Alicia.

CHAP. III.

And how should I know your true love,
 From many another one ?
 O by his cockle hat, and staff,
 And by his sandal shoone,
 But chiefly by his face and mien.

PERCY.

THE conversation between the nurse and huntsman had been prolonged, during a wet November evening, till the warder closed the inner gates of the castle-yard, and the bell at the adjacent convent summoned the monks to vespers; when Lady Alicia's damsels rushed into the guard-room, in terrified haste, protesting the castle was beset by thieves or evil spirits, having seen from the platform a number of figures approach the gates. Humphrey treated their report as the coinage of female apprehension,

apt to convert waving alders into banditti, when a bugle-horn was blown at the draw-bridge, and they heard the warder engaged in a parley. Some desperate outlaws, the general refuse of troops raised for hostile inroads, infested the central parts of Yorkshire, and were the terror, not only of travellers, but of the humbler and more detached inhabitants. Lady Alicia and her maidens soon converted this rencontre at the gate into an attack from these marauders, but Humphrey observed that robbers seldom sounded an alarm before they commenced their outrages, and that pillaging a few yeomen's houses and farms was very different from attacking Pontefract castle.

The warder now relieved their fears by stating that the summons came from some noble pilgrims, whose suite being too numerous to be entertained at the convent, thus applied to the hospitality

of the Earl, and the piety of the Countess of Lincoln, for a night's refreshment; the great swell of the rivers, and the disturbed state of the country, rendering it unsafe for them to proceed on their journey. Father Nicholas, a worthy Capuchin from the monastery, was with them, and vouched for the truth of this representation.

Very different feelings arose in the minds of the auditors at this account. Mabel doubted whether the state of the larder and buttery would allow such entertainments as would do credit to the Earl of Lincoln's house-keeping; and Lady Alicia apprehended there would be an impropriety in receiving strangers during the absence of her father and mother; but Beatrice and the rest of her suite, delighted at an incident that interrupted the secluded state of their unvaried lives, eagerly voted for their admission, silencing Alicia's scruples, by observing, that no act would be

more acceptable than this to the pious Countess ; and as to Mabel's apprehensions of the want of suitable fare, a cordial and graceful welcome would, if their guests were really the noble personages they pretended to be, supply the place of dainty viands. High-born courtesy was soon satisfied ; knights were bound by an oath to strict moderation ; as pilgrims, they were accustomed to coarse fare ; and shelter from rain, and protection from robbers, were solid comforts even if combined with lenten food.

While the draw-bridge was lowering, every hand within the castle was busy in preparation ; and the menials exerted themselves so well, that the great hall, with its blazing fire and huge wax-tapers, presented a comfortable aspect to the storm-beaten guests, who consisted of four knights, as many esquires, and the same number of pages of honour. Beside the escallop-shell on their hats, each

bore on his right arm a white cross, significant of their being bound to Palestine. Declining the offer of dry suits from De Lacy's wardrobe, they spoke of the discomfort of the evening, merely as the commencement of many perilous achievements, and with the indifference of men, who, though accustomed to luxurious gratifications, were ever ready to submit to privations. In conformity to the ceremony always practised by her mother, Alicia now entered, with her train of ladies, bearing napkins and ewers to wash the feet of the guests. She stopped at the knight, who by advancing to meet her, seemed to be the principal, and dropping on one knee, with decorous courtesy, poured water into the silver vase, and invited him to a refreshment which, as it was the custom of those times to offer, it was equally the punctilio of the guest to decline. On the present occasion, the pilgrim seemed less adroit

at raising and complimenting the kneeling beauty, than accorded with the highly refined gallantry of chivalry ; but one of his companions, indignant at his delay, pressed forward, and, with one hand taking off his hat, with the other raised the Lady, then prostrating himself before her, kissed the spot where she had knelt, and again retired behind his associates. The action seemed a sudden impulse ; it was momentary ; but Alicia caught a glance of a noble figure, an expressive countenance, and an air supereminently graceful. Her eyes followed this knight with an attention which made her, in her turn, unobservant of the elaborate praise with which she was now addressed, by the person to whom she had paid the compliment of superiority.

Meantime the board was covered with wine, manchets, and confections, the retainers of De Lacy's household took their stations in the hall, and the minstrels,

arranged in the gallery, thus welcomed
the strangers to hospitable safety :

The Pilgrim in his amice gray,
And aged Palmer, travel worn,
Benighted in their tedious way,
Stop at the chapelage to pray,
Oh! Virgin, pity our dismay,
And speed the blessed morn.

They hear the solemn passing-bell,
A soul's departure speak ;
Fast drives the sleet, yet round the dell,
Responding signals echoing tell,
That, issuing from their covert cell,
Their prey the outlaws seek.

And still the Pilgrims drop their beads,
And closely grasp the holy rood ;
When hark, the sound of trampling steeds,
Fast toward the chapelage it leads,
And soon a dreadful cry succeeds,
“ Spare but our lives ye men of blood !”

But gaily at this awful hour,
We pour the wine of ruby die ;

High rises our embattled tower,
 Impervious to the sleety shower,
 The felon outlaw's desperate power,
 Scans it with hopeless eye.

Full largely be the bowl supplied,
 And pledge it to De Lacy's name ;
 The chief who stood at Edward's side,
 And with his faulchion battle dyed,
 By Dee, by Jordan, and by Clyde,
 Asserted England's fame.

The knight who had hitherto acted as leader of the company, led Alicia to the chair of state, and placed himself by her side. The rest arranged themselves according to their rank, and the presence of the young damsels added beauty and vivacity to the repast. The pilgrims, with their cloaks and staves, seemed to lay aside the melancholy sanctity of their appearance, and to converse like men of the present world. One only was excepted ; the knight who so gallantly

raised Alicia from her knees : he remained wrapped in his cloak, his hat flapped over his face, and his eyes fixed on the ground, either silent or conversing at short intervals with Father Nicholas, who was next him, respecting the most celebrated shrines and relics, which they should visit on their way to Jerusalem.

It generally happens that anxiety to please increases in proportion to the ill success of our efforts. Alicia's attention was fixed on the behaviour of this abstracted guest, whom she rightly supposed bound by a vow, not unfrequent in those days, to reserve and abstinence. His companions paid him a visible deference, which convinced her that he was really the greater personage, while the pilgrim on her right hand borrowed temporary rank for the occasion. She was impatient for the time of separation, as that would allow her to address her guests individually, without departing from the de-

corous delicacy which marked the demeanour of high-born damsels. The turret-bell announced the hour of midnight ; Alicia rose with her suite, lifted the golden cup to her lips, and addressed to the circle the parting good-night of pious hospitality. Then moving round the board, she repeated to each her wishes, that the holy virgin and blessed saints would speed their journey, and safely restore them to their native country. The melancholy pilgrim raised his bonnet as she accosted him, and once more discovered the benign majesty of his striking countenance.

“ Had my father,” said Alicia, “ happily been at his castle, to supply what my unskilful youth has, I fear, omitted for your entertainment, I flatter myself, Sir Knight, the hours would not have passed so heavily as I perceive they have done. Yet will I trust to that courtesy which ever attends the true

nobility which your demeanour testifies, to pardon a simple maid who is a stranger to courtly manners. Will you believe her heart is innocent of those neglects your well-instructed eye must have discovered? and if you report any thing of Alicia de Lacy, say she designed no offence to those who honoured her father by seeking the shelter of his roof."

The stranger's eyes were fixed on Alicia, while she spoke, with such respectful, but soul-searching observation, as soon made her withdraw her timid glances, and suffused her cheek with blushes, while, with breathless agitation, she hurried over the speech she had been fabricating the whole evening. She hesitated, paused, and he answered in a voice that to her "seemed a trumpet with a silver sound."

"If, Lady, amid the severe restrictions to which I am bound, I sometimes regale my thoughts with the retrospect of

your goodness, a sense of my own unworthiness will embitter the remembrance, unless you will also promise to make gracious allowances for that infirmity which deadens the faculties of the soul, and closes every avenue to delight. There is a sadness, as I too strongly experience at this moment, which even the accents of a pitying angel cannot dispel."

"You speak of infirmity," replied Alicia, whose susceptible heart instantaneously melted at the idea of suffering. "If disease afflicts you, I cannot allow you to depart till rest, and the prescriptions of our skilful herbalist have removed your malady, and fitted you for your journey."

"The disease of the soul," answered the stranger, "mocks all sanatives but those administered by the Great Physician. My woes, Lady, are beyond thy art to heal, unless (for worth like thine

must have interest with heaven) thy prayers can call down a blessing on this distracted kingdom; restoring unity and wisdom to her counsels, and success to her arms."

"My orisons," replied the lady, "shall be more frequent, since you request them; but will it be a breach of courtesy to ask the name of him who thus gives me credit for deserts which my parents never found in one whom they only call a well-intentioned girl? I ask it, Sir, because, with my prayers for England, I would blend petitions for the preservation of that patriot who must be so essential to her prosperity."

The stranger drew from his finger a ring, which he presented to the lady, saying, "The Earl of Lincoln will recognize this token, as an endeared pledge from a compatriot, binding him to his oath to Edward the Great, and confirm-

ing his resolution of preserving the independence of his country."

" You have put the ring," said Alicia, with a blushing smile, "on the same finger with the pledge of my contract to Lord Surrey. Will he also recognize you by this token?"

" Happy Surrey!" replied the stranger; and Alicia fancied he sighed as he spoke; " yet, if he acts as a faithful, determined patriot, he will be worthy such a reward."

Alicia felt it difficult to continue the conversation. The knight cast his eyes on the ground, folded his cloak around him, and again drew his hat over his brow; at the same moment the other guests rose, the seneschal called for lights, Alicia and her ladies waved their hands in a final adieu, and the company retired to their respective apartments.

Silence did not reign in that appropri-

ated to the lady. Whether there really was something superior as well as mysterious in the melancholy knight, or whether, with handmaid-like humility of judgment, Alicia's eyes served as a cynosure to guide the judgment of her damsels, they joined in praising this wonderful unknown, who, they agreed, must be the principal knight, since the rest attended all his signals, and, when he put on his hat, broke off the conversation, and called for lights. One of the women observed he was of royal blood; for the grooms had whispered her, that the arms of Plantagenet were on the housings of his saddle, quartered with lilies. Mabel recognized this as the future husband of her lady, whom St. Audrey had shewn her, and blessed the kind saint, exclaiming, "He is the Duke of Normandy, come in disguise to see our lady's beauty, before he wears her colours at Wallingford tournament."

"He is not very gallant for a lover,"

said Beatrice, who seemed the only exception to this concert of eulogists, "and he travels with an odd apparatus; for, as he put the ring on my lady's finger, I discovered that he carried an agate urn under his cloak."

"O!" interrupted Dorcas, "certainly he is some faithful lover, that has lost his true mistress, and it is on that account he is so melancholy, and not because the King is misled by Pierce Gaveston."

Alicia, who had hitherto remained silent, now interrupted the conversation. "You, ladies," said she, "seemed to find your companions lively; did you not also find them communicative? Surely, while so much gay raillery passed among you, some unguarded words must have dropped, which would enable sagacity to discover to whose suite they belonged." The damsels endeavoured to recollect, but all which their united remembrance could furnish, was no more than that their

guests were actively employed in the Scottish wars, and had now left the North, in consequence of an armistice lately agreed upon between Robert Bruce, the valiant defender of his country's independence, and the King of England.

This clue furnished Alicia with a subject for meditation during some sleepless hours, till she at length discovered a nobleman who had a right to the armorial bearings of the French and English monarchs, and also had taken a distinguished part in the warfare lately maintained in the border-countries. This was Thomas Earl of Lancaster, grandson of Henry the Third, by his second son Edmund, on whom the coarse phraseology of the age bestowed the name of Crouchback, as they did that of Longshanks on his brother, who so royally wore the English crown. The mother of the Earl of Lancaster was Blanch of Artois, Dowager Queen of Navarre, sprung from the

Kings of France, and consequently nearly allied to the young Queen Isabella. Alicia had heard the Earl of Lancaster described as a man who rather reflected honour on, than derived honour from his princely birth. Blessed with great personal talents and accomplishments; educated at the university of Padua in all liberal learning; solemn, yet prepossessing; a warrior and a patriot; dignified and courteous, rather than gay and gallant in his behaviour to ladies: in fine, a man on whom England turned a longing eye; and, glancing from him to their present sovereign, wished that it could be proved that "some night-tripping fairy had exchanged the children as they lay." Combining these circumstances, Alicia rather wondered how she happened not to discover her guest the preceding evening, than to doubt the certainty of her present conclusion.

But that treasured urn carried by him--

self, and clasped to his heart, his determination of visiting Palestine, his melancholy, too deep, she thought, for the lofty tone of a patriot's sorrow, with romantic enthusiasm common to inexperienced youth, she supposed must proceed from grief for a lost love. She examined her two rings by the watch-light: that of her espousals, received from Surrey, was enriched with two heart-shaped rubies, linked by a diamond chain. This she now thought a trite and ungallant device. Love should be the free reward of faithful service or high desert; but Surrey, depending on the compulsory nature of a premature contract, held her, like a reclaimed falcon, allowing her only a short space to try her wings, with the power of drawing her back whenever he thought fit. Nine years had elapsed since her father betrothed her to this Earl. She remembered little about the transaction, except that she was terrified, and cried when

she was told she must be his wife ; and consented to the union only as a preferable alternative to passing her days in a cloister, to which her mother, then rich in the possession of several children, wished to allure her, by describing it as a residence that afforded the finest music and the greatest plenty of conserves. Even at that age she thought it would be pleasanter to be mistress of several fine castles ; to ride on a white palfry, covered with silver trappings ; to dance whenever she pleased ; to hunt and hawk with a train of fair ladies ; and to sit under a canopy of state, listening to minstrels and stage-players. She was willing to be called Lord Surrey's wife,—any body's wife,—who would afford her these gratifications ; for, except the melting diapason of the vesper-hymn, and the little hoard of sweetmeats which the kind nuns gave her in the refectory when she visited convents with the Lady Countess, she had

seen too many splenetic humours and unnecessary mortifications attached to a routine of formal devotion, to think of consecrating herself to that monastic life, which, however it might prove a quiet harbour to the shipwrecked hopes of age, appeared like a dungeon to the anticipations and energies of youth.

Alicia remembered, that at the time of their espousals Lord Surrey was handsome, gay, richly dressed, expert at dancing and riding at the ring, liberal in his largesses, and tolerably happy in his style of compliment; yet he uttered no sentiment half so expressive as what was implied in the request that she would be a mediatrix for the peace of England. In manual activity and personal grace he was far exceeded by Guy de Beauchamp, the young Earl of Warwick, her father's ward, and, in all probability, by many also of the practised gallants of the court. It was unfortunate (supposing she really

possessed that super-eminent loveliness and worth which all her father's dependants, and now this enlightened stranger, ascribed to her,) that her premature contract precluded her from making a free, and probably happier choice. The flutter of vanity thus mixed with the sigh of regret, till, at the approach of day, she fell into a light slumber, in which the lilies of France and the lions of Plantagenet were confusedly blended with the pilgrim's cockle-shell and the crusader's cross, lovers in disguise, and bloody Saracens.

Her reverie (for so it might be called, rather than a dream,) was dissipated by the early appearance of Dorcas. "Gracious lady," said she, "pardon my intrusion, but I come to announce a wonderful discovery. There is, by the favour of St. Cuthberg, a holy relic now in this castle, which if you do but secure, we shall all be as happy as our hearts can wish."

Alicia permitted Dorcas to explain.

“When your ladyship,” said she, “dismissed us, Sybil and I declared we could not sleep for thinking what was in the urn which Beatrice saw under the silent knight’s cloak, so we walked in the corridor, and talked about it; and Sybil told me it might be a pickled evil spirit, brought from the Red Sea. At last we saw a light in the chapel-window, and I fell on my knees, supposing it had got out, and was making a bonfire of the mass-books; but Sybil said if she died she would peep in; and there she saw the silent knight at confession to Father Nicholas. He was only in his hose and doublet, and she was sure he had no urn with him; so says she, ‘Now is our time,’ and we ran as fast as possible to his chamber, and there stood the urn sure enough. What does your ladyship think was in it? Why, the heart of Saint Rosalie, wrapped up in spices.”

“ How did you know it was Saint Rosalie’s ? ” inquired Alicia.

“ Because it smelt of roses. Has your ladyship forgot her story ? The wicked infidels commanded her to be burnt, only for being faithful to her true love ; and the fire was all changed to roses ; and the place goes by the name of the Field of Flowers ever since. So Saint Rosalie, when she died, ordered her heart to be embalmed, and gave it this blessing, that whoever touches it shall marry the very man they like best. I learnt this legend as soon as I could speak, and night and day it has been my prayer that I might but touch the heart of Saint Rosalie.”

From the deportment of her illustrious guest, Alicia did not suspect he would affix any peculiar value to such a wonder-working relic ; and the idea that it belonged to some person connected with his own history, returned with no very pleasing reflections. It now occurred to her,

that though the laws of hospitality did not enjoin her attendance, it would be a graceful exercise of politeness to present the morning cup to the knights, and repeat her good wishes at their departure. She summoned her attendants, and hastened into the hall for this purpose, but all were gone, except Friar Nicholas, who stood with his sandals braced, leaning on his staff, waiting only to give his benediction, and return to his convent. Alicia signified her wish for a private conference, and he immediately attended her to her oratory.

“ Have you committed any offence since the departure of Brother Ambrose?” inquired the Friar. “ I know not,” replied the Lady, “ whether anxious curiosity is a sin; and you, Father, must inform me if, by your holy office, you are required to enjoin me a penance, or relieve the painful solicitude I feel, by frankly telling me what you know of our

unknown guest, and the contents of the urn so assiduously guarded, and yet kept from our observation."

"Lady," replied the Friar, "the frankness of this inquiry is a proof that your anxiety has no affinity to what it would be sinful for a betrothed maiden to cherish. Your guests were, that illustrious prince the Earl of Lancaster, his chamberlain Sir Robert Holland, (whom, as he is now under a vow of penance, he requires should assume the state he himself declines, during his journey to the court,) and also his treasurer and secretary. These came to your castle, with their esquires and pages, but a long suite of grooms and yeomen were accommodated by my poor brethren at the convent, who are unfurnished with means to entertain a prince of the blood royal."

"And the urn?" inquired Alicia.

"Contains the embalmed heart of our late revered sovereign, who, on his death-

bed bound his son, by an oath, to send it for interment to the church of the holy sepulchre at Jerusalem, together with thirty thousand crowns for the use of christian captives, and destitute pilgrims. The King having neglected this duty, the Earl of Lancaster wishes to undertake it from respect to his uncle's memory, and the Scottish wars being now suspended, the pious general is going to the King, not to join in vain delights, but to adjure him to remember the promise he made to his father, and to regard the salvation of his 'own soul."

"Can you, Father," resumed Alicia, "tell me the cause of the Lord Lancaster's extraordinary reserve and melancholy. My maidens persist in thinking such deep depression must proceed from love."

The Friar raised his eyes from the ground, and fixed them on the conscious inquirer, who, blushing at her own dis-

ingenuity, avowed by her confusion, that the thought was her own.

“ I shrived the Lord Lancaster,” returned Father Nicholas, “ and may truly say I never had before me a penitent whose soul was so truly sanctified, and pure from the pollution of earthly passions. And, fair daughter, if in the deep regrets of a prince and patriot, for the loss of a worthy king, cut off ere his mature counsels were completed; and the corruption of him whom hereditary right now makes our sovereign;—if the misery and degradation of a country lately the most glorious and happy in the world;—if shame, at seeing our military glory tarnished; indignation, at beholding the most wise rules of policy abandoned; ample treasures wasted; buffoons, libertines, parasites, and tennis-players lifted over the head of our ancient nobles;—if pity for those who suffer, and just resentment at those who

offend ; — if a perplexing consciousness of divided duty between the King, his cousin, and the misgoverned millions who, in this nation, look to some generous leader to remedy their grievances ; — if all these causes are not enough to depress the Earl of Lancaster, let us, Lady, conjure up some fair trifler, and say she has broken his stout heart with a killing frown.”

Alicia trembled at a reproof, the nature of which she well understood, and, answered, “ Father, you unmask my own littleness, but I will endeavour to be less of the fair trifler, and more of De Lacy’s daughter. Yet, as I am bound to confess to you all my folly, answer me one more inquiry, and the Earl of Lancaster shall be to me, what indeed he seems, a being of another world. Was he satisfied with the entertainment which unprovided haste willingly but poorly supplied ? Said he any thing of my be-

haviour? Did it appear to him weak and trifling?"

"Engrossed by cares and perplexities such as I have described, I question whether he noticed the order of your entertainment; and, as to yourself, he viewed you as the Lord Surrey's wife, and prayed heaven to bless your espousals."

"Yet one more question, Father; only one. Does he leave any lady to lament his loss when he sails from England?"

"His mother Blanche of Artois still survives, and lives with his younger brother, Henry, Earl of Leicester, in retired state at Kenilworth. There she cherishes, under her sacred protection, Matilda, daughter of Earl Maurice, who fell in his country's wars. The Lord Lancaster sees not in the large possessions or extraordinary beauty of this fair orphan, a charm to bind him to an earthly alliance.

He goes to Palestine with a distant intention of entering a sacred order, and after having worshipped at the holy sepulchre, as a pilgrim, to return as a Knight of Rhodes; provided christian kings, laying aside their ungodly enmity, shall unite to rescue Jerusalem from infidels, and his country can spare the services to which he feels she has the first claim."

Alicia might still have proceeded with her "one more questions," but the prudent Friar diverted her interrogatories. "I have thought it my duty, daughter," said he, "faithfully to relate what the confessional chair entitled me to know. When Lord Lancaster was told that our gracious founder, the Earl of Lincoln, was gone to join the confederated barons, he said that concealment was no longer necessary, and allowed me to reveal his name and the designs which he had suppressed, because they should not

be interrupted. 'Tis now my duty to impose the penance which thy too anxious solicitude avows to be requisite. Heaven, Lady, is the only object respecting which we cannot be too curious or too careful. 'Tis impossible to gain a too intimate acquaintance with its glories, nor can we be too studious respecting the means by which we may attain the enjoyment of them. Every virtue is a step which brings us nearer to its gates. Silence is a virtue: I enjoin thee not to mention Lord Lancaster's name to thy damsels, and if they shall assail thee with imprudent discourse, tell them thou art bound to avoid the interdicted subject. Devote this day to seclusion, and employ thy retirement in answering the last epistle of Earl Surrey, thy betrothed Lord."

"That will take but a short time," said Alicia, peevishly, "for it only contained an assurance that he was well,

and a description of his roan-charger and goss-hawk."

"The more scope will be left for female wit, to fashion an ingenious reply. A barren text often gives birth to the most improving discourse, and should the composition want eloquence, it will have its use as a lesson of humility, and assist thee in subjugating a rebellious heart."

Friar Nicholas retired as he spoke these words in an authoritative tone, and Alicia resolved on implicit obedience. But the fair reader will be disappointed who expects to be presented with a curious specimen of ancient literature, in the form of a love-letter, of the fourteenth century. Though Alicia possessed the then singular accomplishment of being able to write, her education had not furnished her with models to assist her in arranging smooth sentences, in which her heart had no concern. A let-

ter to the Earl of Surrey was a task which, once in three months, her confessor required her to perform, and though it seldom contained above six lines, it was like every other penance, slowly and reluctantly performed. She found the present dispatch the most difficult she had ever penned. Even the style of address was perplexing. The phrase "My dear Lord," she could not tolerate. She tried "Noble Lord Surrey," and then doubted if the epithet was appropriate: "Gallant Earl" was worse, for certainly he gave no proof of gallantry, who left his bride unclaimed and unvisited, while, if report said true, many a wanton dame in England and Scotland, had laid successful snares for his truant inclinations. Was there any virtue, any discriminating quality which she could ascribe to him as a mark of peculiar distinction? nothing else but that he was her contracted husband.

She tried how that superscription would look ; disliked it, and then hoped frequent erasures had so injured the parchment, that writing on it was impracticable.

“ I will charge the messenger,” said she to herself, “ with a verbal assurance that I also am perfectly well ; and, by way of being very obliging, I will send my best Norway falcon to keep company with his goss-hawk. I shall have less time for those sports now, as I must remember the Lord Lancaster’s injunctions, to pray for the weal of England. I ought also to make him some return for his present of this ring, and I think the most proper will be to work him a banner. When he is created a knight of Rhodes, there can be no indecorum in giving him that mark of my attention. I would not impugn the high conceptions which he entertains of female delicacy. Let me recollect. Surely he permitted me to

keep this ring, which I was only to shew my father, as a pledge of recognizance."

As she spoke, Alicia more minutely examined the ring given her by the Earl of Lancaster. It was a solid band of gold; on the outside were engraven a rose and a branch of palm, and on the inside this motto, "Subdue thy own desires." The sentence thus combined with the symbols of England and Idumea, or rather of patriotism and piety, spoke an imperative language, more effectual than the Friar's exhortation, to divert the lady's thoughts from subjects, dangerous to her peace and her fame. As the daughter of an illustrious English baron, as a candidate for immortality, how was she required to act? Renouncing the indulgence of those querulous desires, those impossible combinations of every happy contingency imagination can form, was she not, as a patriot, to look forward to her country's welfare; as a nobly

descended lady, to set a value on her own reputation ; and as a christian, to abide by engagements sacramentally formed ? Away, then, with every recollection of this noble pilgrim, inconsistent with the character of Surrey's wife : in that light alone he viewed her ; she would imitate such heroical subjection of personal desires, and write to Lord Surrey, as the monk enjoined her, in a more diffuse style, and perhaps she might be able to kindle in his bosom those sublime virtues, which (and not, she was sure, any personal superiority) were the reasons why she thought so much of this Earl of Lancaster, this Knight of Rhodes, she meant ; for it was in that character only she would contemplate him.

This letter was at last written in fluent language, but in an extraordinary train of thought. She conjured her betrothed lord to imitate her father's example, and to second the efforts of the barons, to

drive from the realm the king's rapacious favourites, and to restore the glory of England. She alluded to the dying counsels of Edward the Great; and she reminded the Earl of his grandfather's behaviour to that mighty monarch, who, on the King's making an illegal attempt at taxation, by requiring him to shew his title to the Warren lands, produced an ancient faulchion, and sternly said, "My ancestor, coming in with William the Bastard, won his lands with this sword, and with this I will defend them against any that would take them away, for that king did not conquer for himself alone, neither did my forefather resist him for that end." After directing Lord Surrey to the adoption of such rules of action, she added, that he would thereby induce her the more cheerfully to fulfil her vows.

This letter breathing a degree of intelligence and enlarged feeling unusual to the sex and the youth of the writer, and

differing so materially from the brief formal communications he had been accustomed to receive, found the Earl of Surrey labouring under the disgust of satiety, incident to the completion of a licentious amour, and it roused him from the indifference he had ever felt for a fair infant, to whom he had betrothed himself for the sake of peace, and from the same motive, had left unclaimed and disregarded. This letter seemed to exhibit her as a lady fit to superintend his household, and reflect honour on the family she was called upon to perpetuate. He liked the spirit of her requiring from him, as a proof of gallantry, those duties to which, as a peer and patriot, he confessedly was bound; and he felt a curiosity to see what change time had wrought in the child who trembled at the stern pressure of his mailed hand, and hid her face from the dark plumes which waved over his morion, when, in

compliance with her father's will, he plighted to her his troth in a suit of burnished armour. She now breathed the spirit of one of his ancestors, a Countess of Arundel, who reproved Henry the Third for his unjust attempt to deprive her of a wealthy ward, saying to him, "My Lord the King, why turn away your face from justice? You are placed between God and us, but you govern neither for yourself nor us as you ought. Where are the liberties of England so often reduced to writing, so often granted, and by you so often violated? For this I, though a woman, with all your natural subjects, do appeal from you to the tribunal of God, the great and terrible judge, and let him avenge us."

Admiring a disposition so congenial to the character of the stern nobles of that unsubdued age, and which he falsely supposed predominated in the mind of a tender maid, whom admiration (that

germ of love) had made a patriot, Surrey sent back the Lady Alicia's page with an assurance that he would immediately comply with her injunctions, and join the confederated barons, either to terrify the King into banishing Gaveston, or to resist the peculations and usurpations of his favourites by force. As the King was destitute of resources, either in his own firmness and judgment, or in arms and treasures, the struggle, he was persuaded, would be brief. As soon as it was ended he would claim his promised reward, for which he vowed he felt the impatience of a most ardent lover.

Beside this billet, infinitely more impassioned than any she had ever received, the page was loaded with valuable proofs of Lord Surrey's love to his fair bride, and presents to engage the friendly offices of her attendants. The injunction of Friar Nicholas, commanding them to refrain from talking of Lord Lancas-

ter, had been very reluctantly obeyed by these damsels; but the liberality of the intended bridegroom reconciled them instantly to the interdiction, permitting them to apply those forcible but indefinite encomiums which youthful volubility loves to ascribe to some object, as the visible representation of its notions of ideal perfection. Forbidden to praise the Earl of Lancaster, they found, in the painted fans, gold combs, and velvet hoods, sent them by Lord Surrey, reasons why his name would as well accord with the harp of eulogy; nay, better, for was not a generous lover, who promised to remove them speedily from the severe government of Lady Margaret, and the inquisitorial jurisdiction of Father Ambrose, a happier theme of praise than a melancholy, silent gentleman, whose manners promised a continuance of the same system of enmity to pleasure and relaxation? Put the chance of the Lady Alicia's

marrying Lord Lancaster, whom they saw she liked, or Lord Surrey, to whom she was contracted: with the former there was a prospect of the same routine of prayer, penance, and abstinence; splendid banquets, gay minstrelsy, merry gambols, witty devices, rich apparel, and courteous knights, they had often heard, employed the joyous hours at Sandal castle; and though Lord Surrey had hitherto been a remiss lover, he promised he would improve, and would come speedily and transport them, with their lady, to that fairy-land of enchantment, whose reported delights had often excited their wonder, envy, and regret. This happy manumission from their present bondage, was to them an amnesty for past neglects; and they ardently hoped that their dearest lady would not impose such a probationary suspension of her smiles, as would defer her freedom and their own. Mabel, alone, continued

adverse to Alicia's fulfilling a contract, which as she had not confirmed it since her days of adolescence, was not on her side absolutely compulsory ; but her respect for the declared opinion of Friar Nicholas, induced her to suppress all audible expressions of disapprobation. More inclined to look at Lancaster's ring than Surrey's magnificent suite of jewels, Alicia, in her hours of reflection, strove to frame her mind to act as duty should enjoin, and to discourage the hope which frequently arose in her bosom, that something would occur, honourably to acquit her of this premature engagement.

CHAP. IV.

I have liv'd
 To see inherited, my very wishes
 And buildings of my fancy ; only one thing
 Is wanting.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE Earl of Lancaster, departing from Pontefract, first shaped his course to Kenilworth castle. That magnificent abode bestowed on his father by his royal grandsire, had been forfeited to the crown by the treason and death of Simon Montford, whose ambition and arrogance betrayed the cause of liberty which he had affected to support. Within this stately pile the Queen of Navarre, her younger son Henry, and her ward Matilda, then resided. Since the death of Earl Edmund, Queen Blanche, (who had been successively the wife of a feudal

sovereign and an English prince,) withdrew from court, and devoted her days to works of piety and beneficence; the absence of her eldest son in the Scottish wars, giving her ample occupation in the care of his estates, and in administering justice among his vassals. Thus, though the duty of feeding the destitute was not neglected, her assiduity and bounty were chiefly exercised in preventing calamity, by encouraging the efforts of industry, and giving a spur to despondence. Such were her public occupations; her domestic ones consisted in forming the minds of her son Henry, and of the fair orphan, whose wardship she solicited, not from motives of avarice, but the most liberal humanity. She beheld the infant Matilda friendless and beautiful, the heiress of a large demesne, hated by the English, on account of her country, and apparently a ready prey to any baron whose avarice might tempt

him to compass her ruin, under the deceitful guise of her guardian. To instil noble and virtuous principles into her soul, and at the same time to preserve her person from neglect, treachery, or the living death of an unworthy alliance, were objects well suited to the liberal mind of this royal lady. But when Matilda's charms and virtues ripened, the qualities she discovered, made her protectress less disinterested; generosity and pity changed into maternal affection, and it became the Queen of Navarre's dearest wish to be rewarded for the care she had bestowed on a ward, by the filial attentions of a daughter.

The forfeited title and lands of Simon Montford were bequeathed by Earl Edmund, to his second son Henry. This young prince had for some years laboured under the severe pressure of bodily infirmity, and the attentions which disease requires, were, when the numerous du-

ties of his exemplary mother called her from his couch, cheerfully supplied by the gentle, modest, compassionate Matilda. The services which a young, beautiful female renders to an invalid, are aptly compared to the consolations of a ministering angel. In that lovely character Leicester contemplated his fair nurse, when in the most severe paroxysms of suffering; but every glimmering ray of returning health discovered to him that life would be cheerless and unwelcome, unless it was passed with the sweet companion of his infant sports and youthful studies; while Matilda, accustomed to behold him rather with pity for his misfortunes, and esteem for his patience, felt only a sister's love, and as she ministered to his wants, solaced herself with thinking that she thus proved her gratitude to her excellent guardian.

The Earl of Lancaster was called by his father's death, to fill important offices

in the state, while Matilda was in her early youth ; but the description of his fine qualities and deserved renown, (the darling theme of his enraptured mother,) presented to her mind a more attractive object of love and admiration, than the suffering, dejected Leicester ; and by the Queen's glowing description of this son of her hope, she early formed her ideas of whatever was great and amiable, while building on the prompt compliance with her desires she had ever experienced from him, she scrupled not to intimate to Matilda her design, that this saint-like hero should be her future husband. Thus a tender and compliant maid was early taught to feel an enthusiastic admiration for an illustrious unknown, to blush and tremble at the name of Lancaster, and to believe herself identified with the glory of a man whom every one she conversed with held out as the first character of his age. A tender suscep-

tibility mingled itself with the high enthusiasm of this ideal love; and while she strove to imbibe every generous sentiment and graceful accomplishment, avowedly with the design of rendering herself a meet companion for Lancaster, she sighed to see the countenance of Leicester grow paler whenever she entered on his brother's praises, and great was her innocent wonder to discover that the subject was painful only from her tongue.

Though the piety of the Earl of Lancaster so far partook of bigotry as to engage him in a routine of those acts of mortification which seem incredible to the lukewarm devotion and luxurious habits of the present times, it was of a far more liberal stamp than that which, under the tutelage of Father Ambrose, soured the temper and contracted the heart of the Countess of Lincoln. He was rigidly just, an inflexible patriot, a bold sup-

porter of the independance of the national church; and (the stern features of that age considered) he was compassionate and liberal. His filial piety corresponded with his strong sense of the obligations of religion. Though bound on an expedition that required dispatch, he stopped by the way at Kenilworth, to receive his mother's blessing. The general of the northern army, and most potent prince of the blood, knelt, in the presence of all his vassals, while the widowed Queen gracefully and pathetically called down the choicest gifts of heaven on his head. She then took the urn, which was suspended from his neck, in her hands, and kissing it with due reverence to the memory of her noble kinsman, described to her attentive auditory his shining qualities, as a warrior and legislator. We must not ask if Matilda listened to this eulogium; the question shall be answered by any delicate maiden, who, after such an ab-

sence as may have obliterated recollection, sees the man she believes herself destined to espouse, and suspends her hopes and fears while she inquires if he is as amiable as her fancy painted, and if he regards her with reciprocal admiration. While his attention was engrossed by filial reverence, she could look at the Earl unperceived; but when his courtesy led him to address her first of the fair bevy that waited on the Queen's chair of state, her timid eyes fell upon the ground, and the deep tinge of her blushes almost crisped the auburn curls which shaded her soft features. Queen Blanche was not so engrossed by her son, as to be unobservant of what passed in the heart of her young favourite. A just regard for the delicacy of her own sex, and a knowledge of the capricious jealousy with which man flies from the maiden who presumes to interfere with his prerogative of free choice, determined her to an-

nounce Matilda to her son as the lady she should prefer for a daughter, and to probe his inclinations before she permitted those opportunities of free converse which might ripen the liking of fancy into the preference of love.

Seated with Lancaster in her oriel, the Queen of Navarre, in a private conference, expressed her disapprobation of his proposed pilgrimage. Highly as she revered her royal brother's memory, she observed, that the heart of a dead king was of less importance than the weal of a living one. Lancaster was the only man in England whom Edward respected enough to heed his displeasure: the purity of his character, and the dignity of his manners, preserved him from any adhesive reproach on account of those contemptuous epithets with which Gaveston perpetually assailed the royal ear, persuading the King to purchase an idiotic laugh and a paltry jest, at the ex-

pence of a powerful subject's fidelity and attachment. "It is true," said she, "the daring Gascon called you stage-player, because you took on yourself the character of the holy Baptist, and in a morality, acted on the feast of his nativity, gave such wholesome counsel to the King, as suited the censorial manners of the saint. But the base epithet, so unworthily bestowed, is never coupled with your name, even by the slander-loving vulgar, as the term Jew and usurer are with that of the Earl of Pembroke, or the wild boar of Arden is the synonyma of Warwick, on account of his insatiable love of field-sports. I mention this, perhaps, trivial circumstance, to impress on your mind the importance of private character to all who step forward in public life, and to judge how highly you are estimated on this account by your country. The multitude, who in this particular commence judges of their superiors, consist very

much of those whose actions, however vile and immoral, are, they know, concealed by their obscurity; while, with prying detraction, they blazon the faults of those who seek to be their leaders; nor will they be grateful to the public services, or just to the talents of a chief who, by gross indulgencies or sordid propensities, sinks to the standard of their own vitiated morals. Go not, my son, from England, unless you know a peer whose escutcheon is as pure from attain, and who is as well qualified by birth and intellectual endowments, to mediate between an inconsiderate king and a discontented nation.

“ I have spoken,” continued this noble lady, “ as the widow of an English prince, and mother of one who stands but a few steps below that throne to which he is called to be a shield and a sword. I will now speak as Blanche of Artois to the son of her hopes, and bid thee look at

thy large inheritance, derived from the bounty of thy grandsires, and the deserts of thy father. Who beside thyself can support the banner of Lancaster? The arm of Leicester, enfeebled by long disease, presents no hope that he will be able to rear it in the camp, or sit under its shade in the senate. A mother's desires respecting him terminate in the wish that she may close his eyes before imbecile age discharges her from the duty of ministering to his infirmities. Must I then stand, like a tree lopped of its branches, one of them excised by the canker of disease, the other self-devoted, to consume a holocaust? The consecrated orders of knighthood deserve the esteem of the Christian world; but are thy uncle Edward, the lion-hearted Richard, thy kinsman, or my canonized relative, Louis of France, less revered by mankind? Were they less heroic, devout, and just than those grand masters of the Teutonic

order, those knights of Calatrava, those Gerards de Provence, or Velasquez, who, previously devoted to the ministry of the altar, girded a sword on their white albs, and, by engrafting the soldier on the priest, connected chivalry with celibacy? Wherefore, then, should their example stimulate thy imitation, rather than the social habits of our progenitors? The duties we owe to God and man blend in sweet unison. Surely, my son, the husband and the father is not less a servant of Him whose power formed, and whose goodness sustains this visible world, than the anchorite in his hermitage, or the monk in his cloister. Is he likely to have less of the spirit of a Christian soldier who fights for the endeared ties of social charity, than he who, dissevered from the community he defends, has no warm appeals to his heart, no potent claims of participating interests to revive the occasionally torpid sense of duty, and prevent

justice from becoming inexorable, or honour morose? Marriage was pronounced honourable, and blessed four thousand years before Paul of Thebais discovered that it increased the misery of the militant church in a state of persecution. Patriarchs, prophets, and evangelists have been commended in holy writ for conducting their children in the paths of religion, before our father the Pope decreed in his councils that Christian perfection is attained by abstaining from connubial vows; yet can that situation in life be most approved by heaven, which may not be universally adopted without defeating the design of our creation? Be you the servant of God and of the common weal: defend the liberties of a people who look to you for protection. Preserve the splendor of a crown which may encircle your own brows or those of your posterity, to whom transmit your reputation, your example, and your possessions.

Leave pilgrimages and supererogatory vows to those whose secession from the world will occasion no lamentable void, to reprove them for leaving the watch-tower to a less faithful warder. Let decrepid age turn monk ; let imbecile dotards become wandering palmers ; but let Thomas of Lancaster brace on his armour, and say to the fathers and husbands who follow his red-rose banner, I have the same endeared interest in the welfare of England."

While the Queen spoke, Lancaster preserved a respectful silence. A variety of tender emotions were awakened in his mind ; and among the number, the forbidden image of De Lacy's daughter, which his own important duties, and his knowledge of her engagements, alike required him to banish. Yet, since his mother so frankly discovered her wishes, he conceived it incumbent on his filial duty to avow the sensibility which the

most fascinating beauty and engaging sympathy had unawares excited in a heart fortified by no common securities, yet still conscious of its deviations from prudence and rectitude, and resolved to break the chains it disdained. His answer to the Queen was respectful and candid.

"When my gracious mother," said he, "speaks of me as a man selected by nature to take the lead in the state, she indulges rather the warmth of her affections, than the solidity of her judgment; but I must not therefore forget that, with the talents Heaven has given me to call forth my gratitude, I have also many infirmities and evil propensities, that require constant watchfulness; and when I supplicate to be preserved from temptation, I admonish myself to avoid those situations that would ripen the sinful principle in my soul. Neither abstinence nor prayer can wholly subdue my desires for human glory. I renounce it at matins; I pray

that my senses may be closed to ambition ; to the irritable and vindictive feelings : but when I step from my closet, my heart vibrates to the sound of praise ; it is pained by neglect, or wounded by reproach ; and at vespers I return to my oratory, with a conscience loaded with the offences I in the morning abjured. My feelings are too keen, my sense of injustice too acute, and my passions, when roused, too peremptory to allow me to walk discreetly in the crowded paths of public life : and so far from my relation to the crown pointing me out as one fit to stand forth as a leading statesman, it seems a call to retirement, since I am sufficiently near in blood to make my actions suspicious to the King and the people ; perhaps, to excite aspiring wishes in my own mind. Yet, beside the expectations of issue from the King's marriage, his father's sons by Margaret of France are promising youths ; and the young

Earl of Gloucester, the heir of his eldest daughter, possesses virtues worthy of a crown. Of him, Madam, I could say, that in respect of birth, intellectual endowments, and unspotted fame, he is meet to stand as a reconciling mediator between the King and his people. In every thing but ardent love to my country I yield to Gilbert de Clare; but the interest I take in its welfare is too lively to require a stimulant from consubstantial or paternal ties.

“ I will now answer your Grace as my mother. I have not, by rioting in Circe's court, contracted contempt for the sacrament of marriage; but the niceness of my discrimination requires qualities in a wife which I have not hitherto discovered.” The Earl faltered as he spoke, for he thought of Surrey's contracted bride. He resolved to forget her; but his unswerving respect for veracity compelled him to be explicit; he

proceeded in evident confusion. " To such personal beauty, noble birth, and gracious manners, as would allow her to sit among England's fairest dames without raising a blush on her husband's cheek, I also must have superadded, that elevation of mind which would satisfy me that my honour and happiness were safe in her care ; not from my watchfulness, but her own intuitive sense of propriety and firm discretion. As I am, most happily, famous for my mother's virtues, if my wife's conduct afforded a contrast for slander to discuss, my wounded pride would make me wretched. Shall I own that I have seen a woman whose manners answer this description ; whose correct education, and pious patriotic sentiments, accord with my own. But if I could forget that England seems on the eve of a civil war, I must remember that this high-born beauty is the right of another. Having made this confession to your Grace, which

even my ghostly father knows not, you will urge me no further. In filial respect to your avowed wishes, I promise not to enter into engagements that will proscribē the ties of social life. Should my brother be restored to your devout prayers, you may then no longer object to my leaving England ; but preserving one son to sustain the banner of Lancaster, allow me to indulge the peculiarity of my disposition, which is more fitted to plant the cross on the walls of Solyma, than to pursue a lady's love through the labyrinth of her caprice and affected scorn ; or even to endure, with wise forbearance, those petulances and weaknesses which, one instance excepted, I have seen the common characteristics of women."

The Queen of Navarre perceived that recent disappointment, and the mortification of a defeated General, increased her son's constitutional melancholy ; and satisfied in his promise that he would con-

tract no engagements that would insuperably bar her wishes, she resolved to wait the return of mental sunshine before she attempted to combat arguments, in which there was more of enthusiasm than solidity. She contented herself with saying, that if the Earl of Gloucester, or any other of his cotemporaries, submitted their hearts to as severe an ordeal, they would find themselves less qualified for those rewards of enterprize which it was virtue to deserve, and glory to obtain. But as the preference which her son avowed for some most attractive but pre-engaged beauty, made the generous Blanche apprehensive for the peace of that young maiden, with whose affections she feared she had cruelly sported, she readily conquered her desire for the long-estranged society of the darling of her hopes, and urged his speedy departure, that he might arrive at Wallingford in time to dissuade the King from his ill-timed display of

prodigality and partiality ; or, if that were impossible, to advise and moderate the proceedings of the Barons. . Fearful that further intercourse might prevent the fair orphan from bringing to the wedded protector those turbulent times would compel her to seek, the richest dower of an unalienated heart, she minutely watched the parting interview between Lancaster and Matilda. The firm adieu, the cold fraternal salute, the steady step, and eye quickly turned from the lovely maid to his armed retinue, which marked the demeanor of the Earl, was contrasted by the blushing confusion, half indignant, half self-reproachful, of Matilda. But glancing from a countenance that inspired a confidence that pride would dissipate the illusions of fancy, the Queen looked to see how her drooping Henry supported this speedy separation from a brother whom he had long wished to clasp to his bosom. The joy and hope which flushed his faded

cheek, as he alternately contemplated Lapcaster's insensibility, and Matilda's consciousness of the inefficacy of her own charms, conveyed a pleasing hope to the mind of Blanche, which soothed her present disappointment, namely, that when the angel of death released her from maternal cares, it was possible her attendance on her dependant Henry might be supplied by the connubial tenderness of a mind she had formed and trained to active piety.

An indulgent recollection of her own youthful anxieties induced the Queen of Navarre to take an early opportunity of fortifying, by her frankness, the mind she had contributed to mislead. " Beloved of my soul," said she to Matilda, " I would not pain your delicacy, by addressing you as the victim of unrequited love ; but I must accuse my own presumptuous expectation of governing events, and the hope that I cherished of

being repaid for the cares I lavished on your youth, by the returns of your filial duty. These delusions led me to expatiate on a dangerous theme. Perhaps a mother's partiality may have rated your sensibility too high; yet, even if your heart were bound as firmly as my own desired, I would say, blush not, sweet Matilda, to love Lancaster, while you believed him free to love. Such a preference was only paying homage to that virtue which escaped the contagion of a luxurious court and profligate camp; and to that piety, which has guided his path in an age when heresy and schism have brought religion into disrepute. Providence, which successively deprived me of two honoured lords, one, the contracted spouse of my youth, the other, the selected choice of my confirmed judgment, has destined the son of my hopes to become the victim of hopeless passion. When he left Kenil-

worth, your graces and virtues were closed in the bud of childhood; and he is now rendered indifferent to their expanded loveliness, by a preference which the tone of his feelings makes me fear is insurmountable: yet, darling girl, in whom Providence supplies the want of a daughter to my hours of widowhood, add not to my self-reproach and disappointment, the sharper anguish of seeing you suffer, with silent patience, a lasting regret; through the acknowledged vanity of my frustrated wishes. Permit me to hope, that though fancy may languish for the image it has endowed with powers of fascination — though even judgment may predispose an unoccupied heart to revere the excellence which fame approves, — it is only endearing attentions, long indulged intimacy, or confirmed habit, which can engender indissoluble love. Your days must not be doomed to repining single-

ness; even Thomas Plantagenet, if cold to your worth, is undeserving such a sacrifice."

Here Matilda threw herself at the Queen's feet, and eagerly inquired if her bold expectations were known to the Earl of Lancaster. "I would hide me in a nunnery," said she, as her hands attempted to conceal her indignant blushes: "never should the world, never should the Lord Lancaster behold the woman whom his lofty mind would despise for letting her presumption outrun his judgment."

Queen Blanche soothed Matilda's apprehensions, by assuring her that no disclosure had taken place. "I knew," resumed she, "your strength of mind would refuse the substitution of compassion for affection; but let me further require, that, remembering the testamentary councils of your father, you will not think of a monastic engagement,

which would counteract his disposal of your person. Your gentle virtues designate you to adorn the mansion of domestic love ; as the social red-breast, who, grateful for kindness, calivens with its sweet strains the roof under which it shelters, so in these turbulent times must the rich and friendless heiress, whom her father's will bars from a cloister, seek shelter from rapacity and tyranny under a husband's honourable protection."

Matilda listened to the counsels of her royal friend, without believing them impracticable : for while the Queen, with guarded delicacy, induced by her former precipitation, cautiously alluded to what might be the result if Leicester's restored health was granted to her prayers, the heart of her young friend was rather suffering from the inflictions of wounded delicacy, than bleeding under the anguish of unrequited love. Though Blanche's maternal pride was somewhat wounded

at Matilda's visible indifference to Lancaster, which was intimated by her increased cheerfulness and alacrity, she rejoiced that though she had erred in trying to secure a compliant maid in the trammels of affection, before she knew whether lordly man would relinquish his valued right of choice to her decision, this error might possibly lead to an union more intimately connected with her own domestic comfort. On the other hand, Matilda, satisfied that her virgin-pride had not been compromised, and deluded by the simplicity of inexperience, supposed she owed the increase of happiness which she so strongly felt, to being relieved from the near prospect of quitting her benefactress, and engaging in new and untried duties. Though she had determined to fulfil the wishes of Queen Blanche, and even supposed herself engaged in honour to marry the Earl of Lancaster, she had lately conceived a strange idea that she

should be much happier in a single state. She had no predilection for a cloistered life; she was not of an unsocial disposition; her heart was the genuine seat of gentle affections; but her delicacy shrunk from forming any ties which would interfere with the cultivation of a very lively friendship she had formed with a gallant youth, of high birth and amiable manners, yet, certainly, not a lover; for he knew she was Lancaster's destined bride, and she had enjoined him never to speak on a subject to which she must not listen. Ladies are often induced to apply to friendship as a solace for the disappointments of love; and in this instance Matilda found it so eminently consolatory, that cheerfulness and content gave new lustre to every charm.

CHAP. V.

When ere from putrid courts foul vapours rose,
 Dark'ning the brightness that my beams diffus'd
 Around the throne, with vigorous wholesome gales
 The winds of Opposition fiercely blew.

THOMSON.

THE convocation at Ware was numerously attended by those Barons who, either from their large possessions or lofty spirits, most sorely felt the degradation of England, now governed by a low-born, unworthy foreigner, who rapaciously engrossing her most valuable fiefs, left her to be despoiled by her antient enemies, or torn by intestine factions. Beside the Earls of Lincoln and Surrey, here were assembled the two Mortimers, the young Earl of Warwick, Humphrey de Bohun, Earl of Hereford, who had married the King's sister, and

Aylmer de Valance, Earl of Pembroke, descended from Isabella of Angouleme, widow of King John, by her second marriage; yet amongst this illustrious synod, though many of its members were royal by descent or alliance, the mature years, inflexible integrity, and extensive influence of the Earl of Lincoln, gave him precedence, and he was unanimously voted to the office of moderator.

Lord Surrey had a two-fold motive to acquire distinction. He was conscious that he had offended De Lacy by his indifference to his daughter, whose affections he designed to captivate, by that celebrity which is the ready road to the female heart; at the same time that he conciliated the stern father, by his super-eminent display of patriotism. His eloquence was commanding, but it was of a nature more adapted to inflame the passions of his auditory, by a descrip-

tion of their grievances, than to point out a course that would insure redress.

He addressed the assembled lords as descendants and representatives of those Barons who had extorted the charter of liberty from King John, and repeatedly compelled his son Henry to swear to the observance of that frequently violated compact. He compared the character of the latter King with that of the present; enumerating the miseries of that long inglorious reign, and finding parallels to the odious Gaveston, in the foreign blood-suckers who exhausted the wealth of England when his grandsire feebly held the sceptre, and purchased the papal permission to oppress his subjects and break his vows, till the patrimony of St. Peter threatened to engross the fee-simple of the realm of Alfred. He spoke of the league formed against King Henry as noble and patriotic in its outset, but rendered disastrous by choosing for its leader

Simon de Montford, who restrained regal tyranny to render himself absolute ; courting the base populace, and offending the nobles, till his haughtiness and injustice became yet more intolerable than the versatility and profusion of the King, whom he insolently shewed as his captive, while he oppressed the nation in his name. Surrey next reminded them (with an oblique compliment to their venerable leader) of the true patriotism of the Earl of Gloucester, who, telling the English not to seek for a captain and a friend among aliens and demagogues, directed their eyes to Prince Edward, and, trusting to his courage and wisdom, freed him from his bonds, and gave efficiency to his cause. At the battle of Evesham the young hero regained the crown, which had been lost on the plains of Lewes ; and Henry (whom Montford cruelly exposed to all the dangers of that combat) was saved from the sword of a common

soldier, by the victorious piety of his son, who hearing him exclaim, "Do not kill me, I am Henry of Winchester, thy sovereign," rushed to his rescue, and, as De Montford fell at the same instant, restored him to life, liberty, and empire.

"Thus," continued the Earl of Surrey, "commenced the public career of him who was our King, our captain, our legislator, and our friend. His banner was displayed in Palestine, in Wales, in Scotland; need I say it was every where triumphant. Need I describe his chastity, magnanimity, and temperance; his bravery in the field, or his foresight in council. Ye who, exulting in the renown of your King, felt yourselves ennobled by his reputation, and proud of being liege subjects to the first monarch of his time, do not require me to remind you, that, counselled by his father's errors, he became absolute only to consolidate his empire; energetic in his mea-

sures, to secure the general diffusion of law and liberty ; at peace with his people, at war with his enemies. The Roman lion, which devoured our spiritual benefices, and roared for our temporalities during the two preceding reigns, supplicated to him with lamb-like meekness ; and if ever the royal loftiness of his nature led him to a momentary forgetfulness of the cause of his greatness, his recollected wisdom instructed him to practise that princely condescension which won back the generous heart ere anger ripened into resistance. My grandsire's story attests this truth ; provoked by an illegal demand to use a brave liberty of language, he secured by his honesty the friendship of the King, whom he dared to resist ; and the sword to which he appealed, as the arbiter of his rights, became his badge of command as generalissimo in Scotland. Heroic princes estimate the worth of their subjects, not

by the implicitness but by the discrimination of their obedience. Say, ye who were the captains and companions of this King, how will ye contrive to remind his son of his own vows and his father's glory? Who can now obtain an audience that is not an adept in the language of flattery? On what subject will the ruler of this realm listen to us, except we tell him of some new device to steal from indolent greatness every recollection of its duties? Shall we say universal poverty withers the strenuous arm of industry? The kingdom is ransacked to spread his board with luxuries; he feasts to satiety and will not believe that others want. His wardrobe (or rather shall I say the wardrobe of the Gascon, through whose eyes he looks on England,) overflows with embroidered vestments and gilded arms, and it is of no consequence that their last cloak is torn, by taxation, from the shoulders of the much-enduring

yeomen. Gaveston (for in this assembly
 I dare hardly call him Earl of Cornwall)
 is gay and happy, laughs loud, entertains
 the King with witty jests and antic
 mummers, with banquettings and tourna-
 ments, with mock battles and pageant
 triumphs, and who dares be miserable?
 Will you, Lord Hereford, venture to say
 that the Welsh, so hardly subdued by
 our late sovereign, despise their country-
 man Edward of Carnarvon? disdain their
 subjection to degraded England, and
 search for some concealed descendant of
 their ancient dynasty, to break what they
 now deem a chain, though when cement-
 ed by a hero, it was esteemed a most
 honourable badge of distinction? Will
 the Earl of Pembroke whisper to the
 King, that Robert Bruce has not only
 driven the English out of Scotland, but
 retaken those border fortresses which
 even the name of a royal Edward of
 England once made impregnable? There

was a time when the stormy Orcades trembled for their independance, scarce secured by seas which no keel could plough; now our own Carlisle keeps a warder in its watch-tower, to see if it is menaced by a Scottish inroad? Alas! Gaveston has a gibe ready; he will say, Lord Pembroke's money-bags are sufficient to buy the whole realm of Caledonia; and the King will laughingly ask us for another benevolence to waste upon his inimitable companion.

“ Lords, you murmur. I will detain you only to point out those circumstances of peculiar irritation, which will direct you to the only alternative; if we would not endure disgrace from the King, as peers, or from the people, as betrayers of their rights. The early dissipation of our monarch is known; an indulgent nation forgave the excesses of youth, but when in the capacity of sovereign, he despitefully and meanly remembered the

firm virtue of Walter de Langton, who had been his prosecutor, what hope could we have of one who wanted generosity and justice to respect the champion of those laws that secure his crown? His father, when dying, bound him by an oath, never to recall his seducer: the royal corpse was not cold, ere, in breach of promise and defiance of decency, he rushed into his favourite's arms, and endowed him with a royal earldom, once most worthily held; gave him to wife a Princess of Gloucester, and the free livery of the Isle of Man! But those high-spirited islanders rejected so base a governor, and charmed by the splendour of personal reputation, they have given to Robert Bruce one of the outposts of England. Yes! they have given their feudal crown to one who, had our great Edward survived a little longer, would have been the faithful subject of England, and not its for-

midable enemy. Such an example is worthy our consideration, for freemen are disgraced by being subject to an unworthy governor.

“ But this is not all; to imprison a bishop, to revenge private injuries, to break his vows, to alienate the crown lands, to forfeit one of our fiefdoms, is not enough. That imperial circle which once bound the brows of Alfred and Saint Edward, which, on the head of William my Norman ancestor, flamed like a meteor in the eyes of France, and beaming on the crest of Cœur de Lion, pointed, in Palestine, to the triumphs of the cross; this contaminated crown, which it was my right to have carried, was borne by Gaveston, at the coronation of our besotted King. Was there no prince of the blood—was there not even an Englishman worthy of the sacred charge? I saw the Earl of Lancaster weep! It was the second time that I be-

held him in tears. The former instance was when standing by the death-bed of his uncle, he heard his dying charge, and received, on his knees, the hand of the Prince of Wales, who was enjoined to consider him as his first subject and best friend. Methinks, mighty peers, this assembly might have expected that potent lord to have proved his claim to those titles, restraining this career of tyranny and prodigality by his counsels, or terminating it by his power. But, engrossed by the toilsome routine of bigoted observances, Lancaster leaves us to seek a leader in some other baron, who, though more distant from the throne in affinity, shews less of the monk and more of the hero, and proves, by his courage and his zeal, the true royalty of his descent."

Lord Surrey paused, leaving the nobles to draw their own conclusions, who was this zealous and royally de-

scended patriot. The allusion to the Earl of Lancaster, called up the young Earl of Warwick, who bestowed on him those copious eulogiums which eager friendship delights to pour forth, asserting that he had, with scanty means and a discontented army, obtained an honourable truce from the Scots, who, encouraged by a monarch they adored, and inflamed to vindictive rage by the chastisements they had endured, harassed England with their predatory incursions, and even menaced such an invasion as would have torn from her the fairest of her northern counties. Reliance on the unblemished honour of the Earl of Lancaster, had induced Bruce to suspend this inroad while he attempted to mediate peace between the kingdoms. "He is now," continued Warwick, "on his road to Wallingford for this purpose, and when he comes among us the monk

will remedy those grievances which the hero has discovered."

The elder Mortimer did not attend to Warwick's retort. Meditating a plan for his own advancement, he rose, saying the King had proved himself incorrigible. His repeated perjuries and total want of royal qualities, taught his subjects to look for redress from themselves. England was not destitute of barons, who, by the wise government of their own seignories, shewed themselves fit to rule an empire; admitting that the late King's issue, by his second marriage, the Earls of Kent and Norfolk, were too young to take upon themselves the task of wielding the British sceptre; that the Earl of Gloucester was too much attached to his uncle, and the Earl of Lancaster only a candidate for an heavenly crown—there might be found noblemen descended from English sovereigns, noblemen, whose wealth and

power were equal to support a contest, and liberally reward those to whose friendship they owed their elevation. In this number he included himself; but he directed his discourse to the Earl of Hereford, reminding him that he was father to a king's grandson, and, as one of the lords marchers of Wales, had, like himself, the command of an army, and thus could collect a formidable array without giving a premature alarm to the King by its equipment.

Hereford bluntly answered, that he was too old to barter his conscience and his independence for a stone-chair, and a crown of thorns. He had been admitted into the privacies of royalty, had seen the concealed side of its state-hangings, and knew that doubt and anguish wrung the King's heart, while the baron jocosely sported, and the peasant carolled over his spade. Nature, he was aware, never meant him either for a prince or a re-

gent ; he was satisfied with her handy-work, and would not mar it by attempting improvement.

The Earl of Lincoln then rose ; age and experience had calmed his impetuosity without abating his patriotism. He was an actor in the wars talked of by Lord Surrey, having accompanied his captive, King Henry the Third, when he was led in triumph, by Leicester, round the kingdom, to witness the miseries resulting from his mal-administration, or rather from the bloody commotions caused by resistance to his misrule. The sight of wasted fields, depopulated towns, and destitute mendicants, so indelibly impressed De Lacy's mind, that though he felt all the indignation Surrey so fluently expressed, and had as little hope as Mortimer, that the King's natural imbecility and want of principle could be corrected, still he considered the sword as a last resource, to which appeal should reluc-

tantly be made, and that while it was steadily grasped in one hand, the other should retain the scabbard. "The Lord Surrey," said he, "has spoken of our late King, and placed his eminence in painful contrast to the degradation of the present sovereign; but I knew him, and loved him too truly to despair of the renovation of his son. Edward the Great was nursed in the school of adversity; its discipline has made many heroes, who, but for its wholesome instructions, would never have been known beyond some petty cabal of intriguers or joyous revelers, whose brief applause would ill have compensated for the glorious record of approving history. Let us all, worthy fellow-patriots, candidly ask ourselves if the enjoyment of our own castles in time of peace, the pliant submission of our vassals, the chase, the banquet, the tennis-court, and the chess-board—all those gay pleasures of wine and min-

strelsy that wait as handmaids on our prosperous fortunes, do not tend to make us lethargic or insolent, extravagant or tyrannical. My Lord Hereford knows as well as myself, that our dogs and falcons often divert us from listening to the complaints of a vassal, or punishing the peculation of an overseer. I mean not to offend my noble compeers; Earl Mortimer may be faultless, I am not honoured with his privacy, but I have seen the good Lord Pembroke smile at the jests of Gaveston, when the circling cup has softened the rigidity of his virtue, and the scoff was pointed at a baron with whom he was in enmity. Nay, it is said that the voice which has so lately kindled in our hearts the fire of resentment at our wrongs, has condescended to chaunt a loose strain among his glee maidens at Sandal Castle. I say not this to enforce the pernicious maxim, that

there is but one common standard of character, above whose level they whom the world esteems most worthy never rise, and below which, those whom it loads with opprobrium, if candidly scrutinized, seldom sink; nor yet do I design to extinguish that zeal for our chartered liberties which, I trust, is inseparable from Englishmen, but to impress upon your minds, that the point we must aim at, in our disputes with the King, is improvement, not perfection. Errors remain in the best men, mistakes in the wisest administrations. A reign of thirty-four years, and the wisdom and courage of our great Edward, were scarce sufficient to heal the miseries of the long preceding civil wars. Let us not hastily open the wounds which his skill hardly healed. Let us be firm, but not make the King desperate by rebellion. To that last resource we may be driven.

by accumulated oppression, but at present there appears more of carelessness and folly, than evil intention in his government. Gaveston, though hateful in England, has, in our sister-island, proved himself a brave soldier. If the King cannot be prevailed on to banish him his dominions, we will insist on his being placed where distance may abate his evil influence, and some honourable incentive spur his ambition to right exertions. What, if he were again sent to Ireland, whither Edward Bruce has just shaped his course, hoping to gain the crown of that kingdom for himself, as his brother has acquired Scotland's. Ourselves, as well as the King, must abide by our oaths. We have pledged ourselves to be his liege subjects, and the points on which we must insist, are war with Scotland, the absence of the favourite, and the appointment of a council worthy to direct in the King's name, and

to his honour, the affairs of this once powerful kingdom."

He then proposed that they should attend the tournament at Wallingford, as a mark of respect to the King's summons, but alike avoid irritating behaviour and that sort of free cordiality which marks conciliation. He proposed that each nobleman should limit his armed followers to fifty, a train sufficient to shew their strength and intimidate treachery, yet, at the same time, too insignificant to confirm the accusation of their being in a state of hostility. He further recommended that they should form a camp without the town, distinct from the courtiers, and wear a white scarf round their right arms, as a pledge of fidelity to each other.

The advice was implicitly adopted, and the assembly dispersed. Hereford and Pembroke cordially shook hands with Lincoln, and took his allusion to their

foibles in good part; but the hint respecting his voluptuous style of living, piqued Surrey, who at once, luxurious and ungovernable, disdained the interference of his intended father-in-law, though he still resolved to wear Alicia's device at the tournament; and after unhorsing his opponent, (an event he deemed certain,) claim her as his reward. Decency, interest, and inclination equally forbade any further delay. It was apparent by the coldness of De Lacy's behaviour to him in private, that though he was willing to associate with him for the public good, his affectation of transcendant regard for the honour of England had not effaced the recollections of the father. A further neglect of Alicia might revive that feud which, for the interest of the house of Warren, should remain healed. The good old Earl of Lincoln, faithful to his word, but discriminating in his judgment, had now all the peers of the realm

in his eye, and even that grand deceptive principle self-partiality, could not prevent Surrey from believing it was possible that a competitor might be found equal in every requisite, and predisposed to receive with rapture, a prize, the value of which he seemed to forget. The praise bestowed on Lancaster was, to him, peculiarly obnoxious : many of the peers threw up their bonnets, when Warwick, with friendly warmth, retorted his sarcasm ; and he could not but observe, that among the remarks Lincoln glanced at other lords, the sanctity of the monk's vest was left unimpugned. He rejoiced that this man was not a personal friend of the De Lacies, and was, moreover, unknown to the lady, though from his reported dedication of himself to a religious order, he felt no apprehensions of his entertaining an earthly love. The letter he had received from Alicia made

this proud voluptuary expect she possessed those intellectual qualities which he required in his consort ; for he, like the majority of those who misapply superior abilities, gave that place in his esteem to talents which he denied to virtue, either from doubting its existence, or from despising the comparative feebleness of those efforts which are narrowed by principle and conscience. He knew he could not tolerate a pretty idiot, if rendered still more insipid by the name of wife ; but a woman of intelligence, even if she possessed not only discernment to see, but spirit to resist ill usage, had attractions. His ingenuity would be exercised either in concealing his own vices, or in compelling her to endure them. Perhaps she would rebel. Delightful ! he had a mistress in every castle ; and she might choose at which she would reside. As a husband, he possessed power to discard

her train, and withhold her dower, and therefore the time would arrive, when offended beauty must lower its haughty tone, and sue for pardon. He again read over Alicia's letter. It required him to be a patriot. She must hear of his quick obedience: the fame of his eloquence would intoxicate her with admiration; he would also appear at Wallingford with such a well-appointed suite as would complete his conquest; and thus, if faithful duty, and the renown of vast abilities, martial skill, gay appearance, wit, and gallantry could secure a woman's heart, or conquer offended pride, Alicia would be his by her own free choice. Why then fear the cold reserve of Lincoln, or turn pale at the unstained reputation and disinterested virtue of the Earl of Lancaster? From the tournament in which he should defend the charms of his

mistress, he would post to Pontefract, and complete, by his personal address, the captivation accelerated by his reputation.

CHAPTER VI.

Ah, gracious Lord, these days are dangerous ;
 Virtue is choak'd with foul ambition,
 And charity chas'd hence by rancour's hand ;
 Foul subornation is predominant,
 And equity exiled your Highness land.

SHAKESPEARE.

MEANTIME the King, the Queen, and Gaveston, arrived with their respective suites at Wallingford. The discontented lords had not exaggerated the court's callous indifference to public calamities, nor the profusion by which those evils were increased. Notwithstanding foreign invasion, and domestic discontent, the King's only anxiety was to secure the company of his favourite ; and the influence of the latter was at present entirely directed to his making such an appearance at the tournament as

should eclipse all the antient nobility of England. As to their resentment, he despised them too much to fear their frowns ; and the King had already shewn that he would go any lengths to protect him. With the weakness common to little minds, he so over-rated the services he had performed in Ireland, that he placed his name on a level with the most renowned conquerors, believing that he had disarmed opposition, and that the remainder of his life might be devoted to reaping the laurels he had so gloriously won. As to the Queen, regarding her as a beautiful child, who would weep when he was displeased, and smile when he shewed a wish to conciliate her, he triumphed in the negligence of her husband, and boasted of having sown incurable dissension between the royal pair. The character of Isabella of France was not then developed ; she was only known as exquisitely lovely, eminently

accomplished, mistress of a most engaging address, and cruelly neglected.

The King, on his return from inspecting the lists, and selecting the gold embroidery that was to face the trappings of Gaveston's charger, was informed that a pilgrim requested audience. His first impulse was to refer this intruder on his important duties to the Earl of Cornwall, but recollecting that he occasionally received presents of religious tokens from his sister Mary, the devout nun at Amesbury, he supposed this to be her agent, whose visit would give him little trouble, as he would only be required to say a Paternoster, kiss the gift, inquire to what shrine the pilgrim was travelling, and send some trifling offering. The stranger was therefore admitted. His majestic height, and commanding deportment, drew immediate attention, which was changed to trepidation, when, on his being unbonnetted, the King re-

cognized the features of the Earl of Lancaster.

“ It is not necessary for our most dear cousin to use disguise to obtain an audience,” said the monarch, stooping to embrace the prince, who rose from paying the act of homage, with an air which spoke that he revered the sovereign, while he blamed the man. “ The Earl of Lancaster is ever welcome, even when, as his aspect denotes, he is the bearer of heavy tidings.”

“ My visits to Your Highness,” replied Lancaster, “ have the infrequency of one who thinks himself more honoured in obeying your commands, than in attending on your person. My garb and appearance are the consequence of a vow which I have made to sustain the character of a mourner till I have faithfully laid before you the condition of your kingdom. Of the army you entrusted to me, I can say no more, than that the part

which has not been disbanded by the discontent of their leaders, is now in safe quarters in Berwick, too weak to oppose the victorious Scots. I have, by plighting my word that it shall remain inactive this winter, obtained for the western portion of the borders, a suspension of those inroads, which, without ultimately deciding the contest, foment a spirit of cruel hostility. All I could do has been to preserve those fortresses, which will serve as rallying points when Your Majesty shall determine to take the field, with an army suited to a King of England."

"Cousin," replied Edward, "we are fallen upon evil times, and it is our duty to submit to the correcting hand of heaven."

Lancaster bowed his assent. "In that conviction," said he, "I approach Your Grace, but my grief is turned into despair, when I perceive that the commiseration excited by the melancholy state of your king-

dom, is confined to your own royal bosom. Even in the purlieus of your court, I see nothing but preparations for festivity. Among your subjects there is discontent, disgrace, and want ; here are exultation, enjoyment, and profusion. Give orders, Sire, that these rejoicings should cease, or permit England to partake in your gladness."

The King answered, that it was the devout wish of his heart that all his subjects should be as happy as himself. Lancaster replied, it were treason to doubt his sincerity ; but though wishes and intense desires wafted our prayers to heaven, man required active exertions to render service efficient. " Few years have elapsed," continued he, " since Your Majesty received a glorious crown, beaming with the rays of your people's prosperity. What then so great as England ? Who so magnanimous and famous as Englishmen ? Scotland lay at your feet ; Wales was in-

corporated with us; Ireland was peaceable;
 the Low Countries and Castile in alliance,
 and France, when it gave a princess to
 your bed, gave her to be mother of a
 line of monarchs who should exhibit the
 rare wonder of small territory and in-
 vincible strength. Neither Emperor nor
 Soldan durst raise the hand of defiance
 against your father, and now the insur-
 gents of Lochaber, headed by a man who
 was bred at his court, a subject, bays us
 in the open field, sends your defeated
 General charged with proposals of treaty
 couched in the style of independence; and
 the King of England, when called to re-
 sist his vassal, talks of submission to what
 heaven inflicts. My liege, if such is your
 will, dismiss me from your service, cancel
 the oath which I took to serve you faith-
 fully on the day you wedded the realm
 of England. I have no occupation in a
 country of whose salvation its sovereign
 despairs. Depute to me, therefore, the

melancholy honour of placing this sacred relic, once inhabited by every affection worthy a prince and a man, in that sacred sepulchre, at whose remembrance piety dies to the world, and every sublunary care is lost in the idea of infinite grace. My sword, if useless to England, shall be consecrated to rescue the land which my Redeemer trod from infidels : there, at least, will I spend the remainder of my days ; and at the foot of the tablet which covers the heart of King Edward, shall the dust of his faithful knight Lancaster await the renovating morning of eternity."

" Your Majesty," resumed Lancaster, after a short pause, " listens to me with your wonted goodness. Suffer me to revive in your recollection the salutary impression of two instructive events. I received knighthood on the feast of Whitsuntide, at the same time with Your

Grace, and three hundred noble youths of high birth and generous endowments. We kept our vigils in the church of Westminster, among the ashes of our ancestors; there we fasted, prayed, and walked from shrine to shrine, implored every saint to mediate for us in heaven, and excited each other to virtuous eminence, by recounting the actions of those whose sympathising spirits we seemed to trace dimly gliding along the distant chantries. The morning rose, ushered in by vociferations of joy so loud, so universal, that the proud roof shook over our heads, and our extacy of transported expectation almost raised our bodies from the earth. It was then we received our summons to attend in the great hall, where the first of monarchs sat on his throne to receive us. Glorious was the cavalcade; the wealth and ingenuity of England seemed exhausted in supplying rare

devices, purple liveries, caparisoned steeds, banners, scarfs, and mantles stiff with embroidery, gems, and gold ; but more glorious was your father in his plain surcoat, wearing the antique crown of the sainted Confessor, and grasping the sword of his regalia. The gallantest nobles stood unnoticed in the pride of youth and splendor, when he rose, with majestic grace, and as you, kneeling, kissed the holy gospels in confirmation of the proffered oath, thrice waved his sword round your head, and bade you rise a true knight, and Duke of Aquitaine.

“ This honour, Sire, you alone received at his hand, but you were empowered to dispense it to the expectant claimants, who from henceforth were to be your fellow-soldiers, compatriots, and friends. I see you now as you looked when leaping on the high altar, pressed

by the concourse of your eager people, who crowded to behold you. The honour you thence bestowed seemed to us a sacrament emanating from the holy of holies. How rapturous was the expression of your countenance, how pure the joy that thrilled your youthful bosom ! The oath there taken bound your noble compeers to purity of life, fidelity in engagements, courage in combat, obedience to the laws, and piety to God. The insignia we there received must not be worn by a knave nor a coward ; and never have the spurs been torn from the heel, nor the pennon inverted, of any of those noble chevaliers over whose heads the sword of Saint George was that day waved.

“ The important objects which your father had in view justified this expense of splendor. He then meditated the subjection of the Scottish crown, as the only means of terminating the woes of the border-countries ; and the flower of

the English nobility, pledging themselves to support that right, became thenceforth principals in that war, as well as brothers in arms. Let Your Grace reflect on their indignant feelings, when they see your General, destitute of resources, compelled to retreat from the borders of a country, through which they marched triumphant even to its northern confines."

The King remained silent, and the Earl proceeded.

"On one other occasion, I was called to witness an obligation laid on yourself, and your nobles. The place was Borough on the Sands, the scene a homely chamber, with bare walls, and sordid furniture; but the most studied apparatus of pompous woe could not have added to the genuine anguish of that dismal scene. On a hard pallet lay the listless form of our legislating conqueror; our paternal king. His mind was not subdued by the torment which exhausted

his body. Never were his talents more conspicuous; never did his penetration more clearly discern, or ably provide against impending evils. There, Sire, you again stood foremost to take the oaths his wisdom prescribed; and I, as first peer of the blood, and representative of all your barons, swore for them and for myself, that his heart should be sent to Palestine, Scotland rendered incapable of injuring England, and Pierce Gaveston banished for ever."

The King's countenance now changed from confusion to resentment and consternation. Forgetting that he had squandered his resources, and offended his barons, by his rashness and versatility, and thus incapacitated himself from obeying his father, he replied, that though it was not incumbent on him to answer the remonstrance of every bold reprovcr, his cousin Lancaster was entitled to consideration. Respecting the Scottish war,

he was ready and desirous to take the field in person, when, he doubted not, he should, with the assistance of his good subjects, soon drive the mountaineers to their fastnesses. If Lancaster were desirous to undertake a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he would furnish him with passports, and a well-rigged vessel, and shew his respect to his father's memory, by sparing so brave a knight to execute his will. The enjoined offering, for the rescue of Christian captives, he would, in due time, send after him by a trusty messenger, and also add to it a gift of his own. But as to the banishment of the Earl of Cornwall, it would be most ungrateful thus to requite an affectionate friend to himself, and faithful servant of the state. His conquest of Ireland (so the King chose to denominate a few brief successes), shewed that even his discerning father had not read him aright, when he despised him as a man incapable

of great actions ; and if his peers would look on him dispassionately, he knew they would discover in him as much aptitude for the arts of peace as for those of war. If, however, the barons resolved to be unjust, he would not be ungrateful. His friend's merit had won the affections of his niece, Margaret de Clare, and the tournament, to which he invited his subjects, was ostensibly given in honour of that marriage, and of those services. But it was also intended to excite generous emulation among his peers, to revive the military spirit, and to shew them the eminence to which valour and wisdom might exalt desert ; and he thus imitated his father's example, as exhibited in the solemn celebration which the Earl had described. When the joust was ended, he intended making a solemn appeal to his lords for assistance, to carry on the Scottish war ; but public business must wait for those coincidences

which gave it a chance of being effectually transacted.

It was now Lancaster's turn to be silent in astonishment, at the credulity which thus applied to imaginary attainments to appease real discontent, at the obstinacy which, overlooking every solemn admonition, provoked instead of conciliating an offended aristocracy, and the folly which discovered a coincidence in circumstances, differing in every point of parallel. Lancaster retired, dejected and offended, and the King rejoiced that he was rid of his troublesome monitor : he supposed, that by persevering in a course which he miscalled firmness, he should as easily rid himself of the opposition of all his barons.

It still wanted some days of the time appointed for the sports ; but as many arrangements among the combatants must precede their commencement, the non-arrival of any knights alarmed the

court, when word was brought that the lords were advancing in a body, armed, and distinguished by white scarfs. No minstrelsy, or other mark of joy preceded their entrance ; they rode through the town in silence, and encamped on the opposite side, stationing their followers around them, and appointing sentinels, and a watch-word, as if expecting treachery. On passing the balcony, where the King sat, they saluted with their helmets, but neither checked their steeds, nor altered the stern gravity of their countenances. As soon as they encamped, the younger peers sent their pursuivants, signifying their design of entering the lists, and the elder lords demanded to sit as judges of the sport.

This sullen obedience, blended with such a studied air of dissatisfaction, alarmed the King and his courtiers. Weak minds are subject to as violent depressions at unfavourable changes of

fortune, as to the elation of sudden confidence, when they believe the scale is ascending. Gaveston had exulted in the mortification of the Earl of Lancaster; which was to him of more consequence than the subjugation of Scotland. In the fulness of his joy, he sent to him an esquire with his iron glove, signifying his wish to break a spear with him at the ensuing jousts: Lancaster answered, that he should attend them, but declined accepting the gauntlet, as that would have implied an acknowledged equality. The favourite's alarm at the conduct of the barons now made him wish to conciliate a man who hitherto stood neuter between the threatening opponents. He went to the Earl's quarters, meaning to soothe his pride by flattery, and gain his favour by affected deference to his judgment. He knew the most superior minds are often entangled in the nets which the weakest can form; and though insolence was the

mode of defence to which his temper most inclined him, he possessed the qualities of the spaniel, as well as of the cur, and piqued himself upon being able to delude his enemies, as well as to irritate them ; but he had no opportunity of trying his skill on Lancaster. The Earl was in his oratory, and refused to be disturbed ; Gaveston desired he would name his own time for an interview ; Lancaster answered, that as they did not speak the same language, an explanation of their respective intentions was impossible. Gaveston saw he alluded to the impossibility of amalgamating their opposite characters ; but though he considered him as his irreconcilable enemy, he had the comfort of discovering that he held no intercourse with the associated barons.

Though Gaveston possessed personal courage in the field, he wanted hardihood to meet his enemies before he had ascertained the nature of their designs ; and till

it could be seen, whether the lords came to contend in martial skill, or to make him their prisoner, the sports must be delayed ; some intercourse must therefore take place between the hostile parties, and the Queen was resorted to as a mediatrix. The Earl of Gloucester and Walter de Stapleton, Bishop of Exeter, were appointed her escort ; conciliation being the object, no fitter choice could have been made ; uncontaminated by the vices of the court, yet faithfully attached to the prince, for whom they ultimately shed their blood, the Earl and the Bishop were alike disposed to act as true friends to their king and their country. But Gaveston trusted still more to the blandishments of the Queen, whose insinuating graces nothing could resist, but the heart of her husband ; and he had the insolence to propose a restoration to favour as the reward of her success.

The honour of a visit from their sovereign lady was certain to make a strong impression on the minds of men whom education, custom, and the oath of knighthood bound to respectful devotion to the fair. A deputation of the noblest barons set out to meet and escort her to the camp. Hereford led the palfrey on which she rode; Surrey, Warwick, Roger Mortimer, and Aylmer de Valence, held over her head a purple canopy. Festivity succeeded to gloom and discontent; a sumptuous banquet was spread in Lincoln's pavilion, enlivened with minstrelsy and pageants; yet care was taken to shew that the barons, though they rejoiced in their Queen's presence, continued inflexible.

The Earl and the Bishop tried all the power of their eloquence to divert this lowering storm; but the barons were firm, saying, that while England was mingo-

verned, her hereditary guardians would adhere to their determination of redressing her wrongs. With the boldness of true piety, the Bishop asked, if, in their individual capacities as demesne lords and conspicuous nobles, they endeavoured, by the influence of their bright virtues, to correct the immoral propensities of the times; if they strictly administered justice, and practised hospitality in the spirit of benevolence; if they were devout, temperate, and courteous. This was a home thrust: reformers in every age have been apt to overleap that first and most important step, self-reformation. The few who could have stood a rigorous test were silent, disdaining to appeal to their own good deeds; the rest clamorously observed, that while the wheels of state remained clogged with rapacious favourites, individual exertions to benefit the community merely increased the resources of Gaveston.

The Bishop referred to the estates of the Earl, his noble coadjutor; which even in these distracted times preserved the cheering aspect of industry and content. He insisted that the conduct of the immediate superior was more important to the happiness of his dependants, than the transactions of government; and, without vindicating the King, he insisted that the blame of bringing the kingdom into this state of depression was participated by a large portion of those who were loudest to condemn the self-indulgence and indolence which they reprobated. Many of the lords were silent, some admiring the amiable confusion of Gloucester, others envying the just eulogium excited by his humanity, and wondering if the Bishop was a monitor equally severe to the King, but the major part justified their own oppressions by detailing worse instances

of tyranny and cruelty, daily practised by the King's adherents.

These angry recriminations grew more clamorous, when suddenly the attention of the disputants was directed to the Queen, who burst into tears; whether really terrified by the impetuous manners and stern looks of the barons, or actuated by the dependance which an artful woman places on the efficacy of that invincible appeal to the heart of man, it is needless to enquire. Suffice it, that the clamour sunk to respectful sympathy: they who in the rage of battle could tread on a dying enemy, or in the lust of avarice, tear the last morsel from unresisting poverty, melted at the sight of royal beauty in distress, and agreed that the grievances, which could not be forgotten, should, for a time, be suspended. For the sake of the Queen, and at her intreaty, they consented to wait on the King, with professions of duty, and to

defer the statement of their demands till after the tournament, she giving them her word, that in case they abstained from all acts of violence, and signs of discontent, she would use her influence with her husband to procure what they desired. As a proof of her triumph, they permitted her to carry their party tokens to the King, on her promising to restore them, in case he refused to accede to such measures as the Earls of Lincoln and Gloucester should both deem expedient.

Though this concession was afterwards severely blamed by the violent members of the confederation, no one had the confidence to oppose its immediate execution, and, with a happy adroitness which disarmed resistance, the Queen herself undertook to remove from their arms the insignia of resistance. She passed to each of the barons, as he sat at the banquet, tossed the scarf with delicate ele-

gance, and as she gave it to her attendant pages, compensated for the spoliation by a betwixting smile or compliment, equally captivating and appropriate. Her conversation with the Earl of Lincoln was the longest and most interesting. She knew that his character stood high in the annals of his time, that he was a brave, faithful guardian of his country's liberties, and patriotic, not only in his public but also in his private capacity. She knew too that he was the fondest of fathers; she had heard the fame of Alicia's beauty; and to be surrounded by the fairest ladies in England, was the favourite wish of one who, conscious of her own consummate loveliness, feared no competitor.

"If," said she, to the good old Earl, whose heart fluttered at the condescension of the royal syren, and at the topic on which she addressed him, "we should select you for our own true knight,

would you pay an implicit obedience to our commands?"

"Old as I am," answered De Lacy, "I can yet run a tilt at any discourteous cavalier who dares dispute that my Queen is the most beautiful and gracious of her sex."

"This will be proved," returned Isabella, "for there are many combatants leagued to exalt a most dangerous rival to our renown. They affirm, that our own England nurtures a fair rebel, qualified to dispute your Queen's pre-eminence; and the service we would impose upon you is to bring this traitress to our presence, that, if report says true, we may punish, or, rather, disarm her presumption, by making her our dearest friend."

De Lacy, exultingly, discovered she alluded to his daughter; he smiled at the graceful compliment, but pleaded the custom of England, which kept unmarried ladies from an intercourse with the world.

“ You must not so escape,” answered the Queen : “ the customs of France differ ; and while you only form faithful wives and exemplary mothers, our early intercourse with society ripens our wits, and makes us such able negotiators as to be equal to the task of disarming heroes. We are not to learn that the Earl of Surrey is betrothed to your fair daughter. What should prevent the celebration of their nuptials from becoming the consummating ceremony of the joyous reconciliation which we hope to cement ? Or if private reasons still operate to defer that desired union, why should the virgin bride continue immured in retirement ; alike denied the privileges of either situation, the amusements and state of the wife, or the free choice of the maid ? At the approaching tournament, Lord Surrey will doubtless confirm her renown by his martial exploits. Our cousin of

Gloucester, who has once seen her, has the same design. Other of our noble gallants are fired to enterprize by the fame of her beauty. Shall the name and device of Lady Alicia de Lacy be familiar to every eye? and must there be no other criterion of her deserts, but the number of her knights, and the severity of their contests? We shall hold the Earl of Lincoln hostile to our dear desires, though loyal to our person, or conscious of some defect in this all-praised lady, if he refuses our request, that his daughter's presence may add to the splendour of this festival."

Thus flattered and importuned, it was impossible for a fond father to refuse compliance; and his chamberlain, with a suitable retinue, was dispatched for Alicia, before the Queen returned to Wallingford, sorely against the inclinations of the Earl of Surrey, who would

have chosen to commence his suit to his betrothed bride in the privacy of her father's castle, rather than in the presence of so many aspiring rivals.

CHAP. VII.

Where throngs of knights and barons bold,
 In weeds of peace, high triumphs hold,
 With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
 Rain influence, and judge the prize
 Of wit, or arms, while both contend
 To win her grace, whom all commend.

MILTON.

THOUGH the visit of Isabella was at first propitious to her husband's cause, it engendered another party in the state, who, under the name of the Queen's friends, made her wrongs a pretext for exciting a dangerous sympathy in her domestic situation; at whose head stood Roger Mortimer, nephew and heir to the Earl of that name. Forgetting that the real interests of the royal pair were indivisible, these persons loudly proclaimed the neglects and injuries of

a beautiful young princess as the greatest national disgrace ; thus eventually widening the breach, they affected to deplore, and stimulating resentment, till it produced the most horrid event which the annals of England contain, fruitful as they are in royal shames and woes. Whether the guilt of Isabella, that " she-wolf of France," originated from those keen feelings of injury which, when unsubdued by the restrictions of religion, urge susceptible minds to crimes revolting to their natures ; or whether, while her heart cherished the most violent passions, her early principles were so depraved, that neither kindness nor merit could have awakened in her breast chaste affection and faithful duty, remains a problem not to be solved, till that awful day, when the degree of the temptation will be impartially scrutinized and admitted, in extenuation or aggravation of guilt. In the soft features, gentle voice, and in-

sinuating sweetness of the royal mediatix, the future rebel, traitress, and murderer, could not be foreseen; every tongue was loud in her praises. The magnanimity of seeming to forget her own injuries, while interceding for that reconciliation so important to the husband who wronged her; of forbearing to allude to the neglect she endured, but speaking with respect of Gaveston, the man who personally insulted her, and taught the King to despise her; — all these heroic instances of self-denial raised her character in the estimation of the barons to that of a divinity, who, while dispensing peace and good-will to man, overlooks the provocation excited by the desertion of its altars. Mortimer, and those who entered into his views, insisted that the ill treatment of the Queen should be included in their list of grievances; but the wiser part, with Lincoln, thought that they should content themselves with

shewing her that uniform respect and decorous attention which true virtue considers as its most grateful homage.

But the Queen had soon, as she predicted, a dangerous competitor for the prize of beauty. Alicia de Lacy obeyed her father's summons with such promptitude, that the suddenness of her appearance surprized him. His youthful days were long past, and he knew not how rapidly the gay expectant of pleasure can post over hill and dale, despise fatigue, and encounter difficulty ; artless, innocent, unpractised in life's subtle maze, not fully conscious of the power of her own beauty, yet disposed to believe all that was said in its commendation, pleased with the smiling appearance of the world, and unprepared for its sad realities, Lincoln's fair daughter was presented to the Queen, who, seeming at first to start with surprize, and then to smile with ecstasy, prevented the act of homage by

a courteous caress. An instantaneous friendship was formed, which in a few hours ripened into unreserved confidence. A camp not being a proper residence for an unmarried beauty, Alicia was lodged in the palace, where the Queen soon acknowledged to her those domestic vexations which she obtained so much credit for suppressing during her short visit to the barons ; and her fair confidant explained why her own nuptials had been so long delayed, by owning, with a mixture of anger and contempt, the coldness of her contracted spouse. Instructed by the advice, and warned by the example of her sovereign, Alicia declared her resolution was fixed not to fulfil that engagement, unless she discovered those indubitable marks of affection which might promise to preserve her from the gloom of an alliance unenlightened by love. One only secret Alicia still concealed, the interest she felt for Lord Lancaster.

A timid consciousness, which makes even innocence feel that shame is not always the associate of guilt, kept her from avowing that his name suffused her cheek with blushes, and thrilled her heart with painful pleasure. Yet was she curious to know why, at the age of eight-and-twenty, he resided at court, secluded from its pleasures, and estranged from its counsels. Was he destitute not only of those passions which are called the impetuous tyrants of youth, but of those lofty purposes which ambition is said to sanctify? Was he indeed wholly the abstracted devotee, the disinterested patriot, severe to none but himself, ignorant only of his own deserving? Isabella spoke of him as a man whom she respected, but could not admire. Worthy, but unamiable, his reserve, austerity, and self-command, set in opposition to the wit, gaiety, and courtesy of her polished suite, gave rise to an idea that he was a misanthrope, and

the courtiers scoffed at him, as a man fitted to a different sort of world, too conscientious to be a dangerous enemy, too stern and uncompliant to be a friend.

In full opposition to this character stood that of Gaveston, who soon placed himself first in the list of Alicia's professed admirers. The systematized opposition which the barons had long shewn to his ambition had taught him to reflect that royal favour might prove an inadequate defence, if their united enmity should ripen into settled resistance. To divert this storm, he sought to join himself by marriage to some noble house, and thus soften the animosity excited by his low origin. The higher the alliance, the greater the security; and the unfortunate Princess of Gloucester was selected for his wife, not from the preference of affection, but because she was niece to the King. But Margaret could only plead her illustrious descent, the repu-

tation of her brother, and those meek compliant virtues which were of no value in the eyes of her capricious spouse : Alicia possessed wit, beauty, and every accomplishment which in those ages assisted woman in her career of conquest ; and Gaveston now openly declared, that had he seen her previous to her engagement and his own, she would have been his first, dearest, only choice. Vainly believing that his merit and the King's favour recommended him to the noblest, the best, and the fairest, he quitted the side of Margaret to chaunt a madrigal, or adapt a love tale to De Lacy's admired daughter, regardless of the sigh that strove to detain him, or the frown that repelled his advances.

The intended gallantries of Surrey to his betrothed bride were suspended, by an indisposition which seized him previous to her arrival. It was called bodily infirmity, but its symptoms were

of a peculiar nature. Imposing and joyous as he appeared in public, it was affirmed that this nobleman was in private the prey not only of violent passions but also of extraordinary terrors, which were traced to an early period of his life, and said to be connected with the disappearance of some children of whom his grandfather was guardian, and respecting whose fate more inquiries would have been made had they not been of a disloyal race, or had the house of Warren stood less high in public opinion. But the crimes which royal favour screened, or its power could not reach, are not beyond the visitation of heaven ; and during the suspension of amusements, or when agitated by any violent emotion, this potent and luxurious earl not only ceased to be an object of envy, but excited, by his doleful situation, that unusual degree of commiseration which is due to the lowest estate of human wretchedness. Such was the belief of the

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an attachment she was not at liberty to return. Lancaster was not of this number : she daily saw him, but other cares than those of love engrossed his thoughts; and, viewing her as a betrothed bride, he would not allow his eyes the dangerous privilege of gazing on her charms. In those times it was deemed honourable for the most powerful subjects personally to discharge those offices of attendance on their sovereign, the name only of which now remains. Lancaster, as cup-bearer, daily stood behind the chair of his sovereign at the commencement of the banquet, while Alicia waited on her royal mistress; but, his duty finished, he withdrew. The grave ascetic partook not of the feast; the indignant patriot and repulsed general indulged not in the gaiety of the convivial board. It was then that the buzzing insects whom the rank soil of the court generates, amused the misjudging Edward with tales to his cousin's

disadvantage. Not only were sarcasms uttered, but slanders invented ; yet still the dignity of Lancaster repelled the one, as his pure morals refuted the other. In vain was it said that the summons of a private intrigue called him from attendance on his royal master, or that, conscious of his awkwardness, he chose to remain among those associates whose unfinished manners did not reproach his want of elegance. His country was his only mistress ; and he left the haunts of voluptuousness to minister to the relief of the many children of affliction whom those unhappy times daily sent to his gates ; and their prayers were his eulogies.

The tournament at length commenced. On the first day, as decorum prescribed, the sports were celebrated in honour of the Queen. Various and uninteresting were its events ; but at the ball in the evening, to the astonishment of all, and to the anticipated amusement of the court-

tiers, the Earl of Lancaster was present. Alicia never thought his figure wanted adventitious embellishments ; though, accustomed to see him the mark of scorn, she did not dare to avow her admiration ; and now that he appeared arrayed in a velvet mantle, and gracefully waved in his hand a plumed cap of estate, his dignity of demeanour was so universally acknowledged, that the sanction of her applause would be superfluous. The King, having indolently performed the task of dancing a measure with the Queen, withdrew to the banquetting-room with his favourite, where wine, gaming, and licentious mirth, supplied the stimulus which his vitiated taste found wanting in innocent or elegant pleasures. The beauteous Princess, on whom all beside gazed with delight, pained at an insensibility alike cruel and ill-timed, stood silent and distress, when Lancaster placed himself at her side, and, with an air of such respectful deference as

would banish from the mind of the person he addressed every humiliating recollection, implored her to allow him to succeed his royal master as her partner in the diversions of the evening. The Earl of Lancaster dance ! A skipping Saint Basil ! An anchoret sacrificing to the graces ! That base spirit of imitation so common to low-minded parasites, which ever seeks to confirm rather than correct the faults of superiors, had taught most of the courtiers to conform to the behaviour of the King, by slighting and mortifying the Queen, and, with contemptuous sneers on their countenances, all eyes were strained to discover such absurdities in her partner as might furnish an excellent jest for the Earl of Cornwall, who would greatly enjoy the ludicrous mistakes committed by the misjudging copyist of his most peculiar accomplishment. But the jest wanted piquancy. The patriot did not attempt to bound with the lightness

of a feathered Mercury, nor glide with the lithe negligence of the volatile Gascon, who considered the importation of a new movement, or a skilful minstrel, to be a national advantage. The measure Lancaster called for was graceful but grave, displaying to advantage a noble figure, and a majestic air ; but as totally distinct from all that was wanton or frivolous, as was the Pyrrhick dance of the Greeks, or the solemn movements consecrated by religion. The dance being ended, he led the Queen to her chair of state, and continued in earnest conversation with her the remainder of the night.

Though surrounded by the gayest young barons, Alicia would have spared all their gallantry for one glance which implied the preference of a man whom, for the first time, she viewed with other sentiments than those of approbation. " If my engagement to Lord Surrey," thought she, " has been his motive for

paying me so little attention, has he not still more cogent reasons for shunning the dangerous beauty of the Queen? How his soul speaks in his eyes! How devoted is his manner! Does this singleness of regard to beauty so exquisite correspond with that abstracted piety which sees nothing lovely in sublunary beings, except as they are symbols of divine perfection? Beware, my Lord of Lancaster, it is not a glorious Madonna, nor a beatified Cecilia, you now gaze on, but the Queen of England, — a married queen, — the wife of your friend, of your sovereign.”

Thus, with that jealous pique which suppressed affection fosters, Alicia felt restless and splenetic at seeing Lancaster could play the gallant so bravely, and herself not be the object of his courtesy. Had she looked into the Earl's heart, she would have found these assiduities proceeded from generous pity. Had she listened

to his conversation, she would only have heard respectful counsels. Perhaps their gravity was displeasing, for the Queen soon retired. Alicia followed her. The friends (for so situation made them) could only exchange a few words in secrecy, the Queen whispering that Lord Lancaster was not the formal anchorite he had been described, while Alicia reminded her of her nuptial vows, by emphatically sending her duty to the King. Painful reflexions attended the night-watchings of these ladies: Isabella meditated on the blessed lot of those wives who find in their husbands an adviser and protector; the thoughts of Alicia took a wider range, perhaps they even strayed to the precincts of a cloister, where women are for ever safe from the tyranny, caprices, and insensibility of man.

The second day's sport was to be in honour of the fairest lady of the court, and the unanimous voice proclaimed this

was De Lacy's daughter. The combatants adopted her device, a doe reposing among lilies, and they varied it by those symbolical colours which best corresponded with their sentiments. The victors were to receive the prizes from her hand, among which was a scarf of her own embroidery. Surrey was in a state of convalescence, and felt himself imperatively called to be present on this occasion. The doe among lilies appeared on his pennon, in a green field, significant of the security of his hope. In generous consideration of his late indisposition and engagement to the lady, the two champions who opposed him submitting to the voluntary disgrace of being speedily unhorsed, yielded him a cheap conquest, and allowed him to kneel to the trembling lady for the first prize. The eyes of the long contracted pair now first met since time had given a piercing lustre and keen discernment to those of Alicia. Surrey

saw that she was as beautiful as his warmest thoughts could paint, and readily believed she was the only woman who could wean him from his libertine habits, and medicine the secret anguish of his soul. But Alicia beheld in him the reverse of Lancaster. A man whose age nearly doubled her own, whose bloated features spoke excess, whose bold eye evinced confidence, and in whose smile she thought she saw a malignant importance, instead of a pleading amenity. The Earl of Lancaster was grave and austere, but there was benevolence in his austerity; he seemed to raise the person he addressed to his own superior level, by his condescension; while Surrey appeared like the bugbear of authority, erected to guard his own pre-eminence. As he snatched the salute, which was one of the privileges of triumph, she resolved rather to take the veil than become the wife of a man at once careless

and presuming ; and though this would probably be the proudest day of her life, she counted its remaining hours insufferably tedious, since she must pass them with Surrey sitting at her side.

But attention was again called to the ring, which was now filled with combatants and their esquires, all vociferating Alicia's praises, and claiming to clash swords, or break a lance in her honour. The clamour was for a moment suspended, and the Earl of Cornwall entered the lists ; for though he had not deigned to appear as the Queen's champion, he chose to confer the highest honour on the lady Alicia, by wearing her livery. Gold and gems studded his hauberk, the trappings of his courser swept the ground with stiff embroidery and silver aglets, and his plume, clasped in a circle of diamonds, seemed, by its redundance, sufficient to decorate the pavilion of a monarch. This cumbrous magnificence was

certainly ill suited to those encounters, which, though esteemed amusements in that age of martial hardihood, strained every sinew to the full exertion of strength and agility. Gaveston supposed that none would presume to dispute the prize for which he appeared a claimant, except those who would be desirous of purchasing the King's favour, by allowing him such victories as were merely displays of science. His charger bore him proudly round the ring, an esquire rode on either side in gilt armour, and the pages who attended were habited in imitation of the barons who had combated the preceding day. A numerous band of armed foreigners followed as his guard, arranged themselves on one side, and seemed, by their threatening aspect, to demand justice for their master. But the most offensive piece of audacity was, that his banner not only displayed the doe and the lilies, in a saffron field (the colour of possession),

but it was depicted with a dart in its breast, and this motto, "She will be mine." A murmur of disapprobation arose at this attack on a lady's fame. Surrey turned an alarmed glance on Alicia, but was pacified at beholding in her countenance the strongest marks of displeasure and contempt.

Several successive combatants who challenged Gaveston were unhorsed, and the judges were about to pronounce the Earl of Cornwall victor, when another knight rushed into the ring.—His pursuivant proclaimed him a champion of the Lady de Lacy, and he defied all the chevaliers there assembled, except the Earl of Surrey. Further to prove that his admiration was confined within the chaste precincts of chivalry, the colour of his banner was that of the faded leaf, the symbol of despair. The vizor of the knight was closed, and he

wore no identifying device ; but Alicia knew it was the Earl of Lancaster, and her feelings were instantly changed from sorrow and confusion to transport, as she rapidly told over her beads, imploring the virgin to give success to her champion's sword. Surrey asked why she applied to her rosary. " I am praying," said she, " that the knight who has just entered the lists may rescue my name from the contamination to which audacious presumption has exposed it." Surrey inquired if she knew him, and Alicia hastily answered that it was the Earl of Lancaster. Distraction ! Met at every turn by Lancaster ! Let him assume the patriot, he is told that while he talks about grievances, that man can shew how they may be redressed ; and now, when he is playing the suitor to his betrothed wife, she remains careless to all his compliments, while her whole frame

trembles as she prays for the success of Lancaster.

But let us return to the lists where, astounded at an unexpected rencontre, yet summoning the animal courage of which he was not destitute, Gaveston fixed himself in his seat, put his lance in rest, and wheeled round to rush with full force on his adversary, who, he trusted, would soon repent his temerity in challenging one who, beside possessing royal favour, "that tower of strength," excelled in all martial exercises. The lances of both were broken, their swords clashed, and an equality of strength and skill rendered victory dubious. But the vanity of Gaveston accelerated his humiliation; at the last charge his horse stumbled and fell. Encumbered and terrified by its pompous trappings, the steed plunged violently, while its rider, stunned by the fall, and entangled by the preposter-

rous length of his gold spurs, hung senseless at its mercy. An universal wish moved the angry barons to hope that he would never rise more; but the Earl of Lancaster risked his own life to preserve that of a man whose expulsion he would have purchased at the expence of his earldom. Dismounting with the speed of thought, he released Gaveston's foot, and drew the apparent corpse from the enraged animal. The Earl then raised his opponent, and took off his helmet; his listless head sunk upon his bosom, and a stream of blood poured over his mantle.

Lancaster called for assistance, but there was another cry more ear-piercing, more desponding. It issued from the King of England, who, in the supposed death of his minion, saw a misfortune transcendently more calamitous than the spoliation and degradation of his kingdom.

He was first at the side of Lancaster, calling upon Gaveston by the most affectionate names, and lamenting his own bereaved condition. The alarm was in every sense unsuited to the occasion : Gaveston was only stunned ; and the blood pouring from a trivial hurt, restored his senses. He revived to a deep sense of shame and vexation, which the unbounded transport of the King did but partially assuage. The barons sat indignant at the weakness of their sovereign, while Lancaster, mortified and afflicted even in the moment of victory, contemplating the long train of calamities to which this pusillanimous, this unaccountable predilection would give rise, rested pensively on his sword, unconscious of the award of the judges in his favour, till Sir Robert Holland, who served as his esquire, reminded him that he must go and receive the prize.

When Alicia saw Gaveston unhorsed, she clapped her hands in extacy, and selecting the scarf which her ingenious taste had rendered the most desirable of the prizes, she held it up, not for the knight of Rhodes, but for the generous guardian of her insulted fame. In breathless suspense she viewed the ensuing scene, till roused by Surrey's remark, that her eagerness to reward desert was singularly contrasted by the retiring diffidence of the favoured hero. "And can Lord Surrey," said she, "be less just to the feelings of a patriot than a grateful woman, even in the moment when humbled vanity tells her that her favour is but a secondary consideration? Of what importance is the emblem of triumph to one who knows he deserves it? Can this purpled silk bind up the wounds of an heart which sees England weep blood, while her King, like a ter-

rified girl, sheds tears for a worthless favourite, in the presence of his convoked nobles!"

The Earl of Lancaster now advanced to receive his reward; and as Alicia wound the scarf around him, loquacious gratitude overcame faltering modesty. "Illustrious and right royal Lancaster," said she, "I bestow the prize of your valour with more pleasure, because I believe your conquest is the reward of my prayers. Daily have they been offered as you enjoined; in one particular only have I disobeyed you,—I have ventured to blend your safety and glory with the prosperity of England."

"Happy Surrey!" again repeated Lancaster, as he printed a respectful salute on her glowing cheek. He spoke in the same tone, he used the same expressions as when they met at Pontefract. Surely he meant to reproach her. She would

not, for the world, disgust so nice a judge of what was decorous in woman, and would therefore rein in her joy, yet, not for the larger bribe of Lancaster's approbation, would she make Surrey that enviable man he seemed to think him.

The joust being terminated by Gaveston's disaster, and the King's following the litter on which he was conveyed back to the palace, the assembly broke up. It was the custom for each lady to lead, by a silver chain, the knight she was most inclined to favour: Lancaster drew back as yielding this distinction to Alicia's betrothed spouse. So honourable, so delicate a rival (if rival he might be called) could not justify Surrey in shewing symptoms of that jealousy which stung his soul. To indicate displeasure would only offend the lady, and point to the perhaps unconscious Lancaster a prize which might reconcile.

him to the world, which, as report said, he intended to renounce. Such a man would be a dangerous enemy, though the most honourable of friends. In that light Surrey resolved to consider him: there was indeed no congeniality in their dispositions, but confidence is a tie on an upright mind. His recent indisposition left a weakness which unfitted him for bearing a part in the evening festivity; Lancaster, as his substitute, would at least preserve Alicia from more dangerous companions; and the vivid imagination which had been delighted by seeing a grave hero in a scene suited to his character, would find its romantic fervours chilled at being tied to a saturnine partner, while other damsels tripped joyously with their lively knights. At all events, to yield gracefully is half a victory; taking the silver chain which Alicia held in her hand, he fixed it on the arm of Lancaster, requesting him,

since the exertions of the morning had overpowered an invalid whom duty to his beloved mistress drew too soon from his couch, that he would be that day his substitute, by amusing and protecting his betrothed wife. But for the last word, Alicia would have honoured Surrey with her first mark of approbation; yet though he was master of the art of deception, his tongue faltered as he spoke, and the smile with which he aimed to gild over his impatience, was the true grin of ill suppressed malignity; while, prouder than a victorious Amazon, the Lady Alicia mounted her palfrey, and led the gorgeous cavalcade back to Wallingford.

Gaveston's fall had too much marred his beauty to permit his appearance at the banquet. The King, to whom nothing seemed unregal which spoke his dotage for his friend, remained in his chamber, while the Earl of Gloucester

took his place at the feast; and the Queen, dispensing with state, introduced the easy politeness of her native France. The pleasure which she took in the favourite's mortification, was visible by her attentions to his conqueror. She spoke to him of her royal kinswoman, the Queen of Navarre; the praise of his mother was a theme on which his filial reverence was eloquently animated. Never had Lancaster appeared to such advantage in the eyes of Alicia, because never before had she seen him in the happy ease of chastised, yet brilliant conversation. Yet at times her heart sunk with painful anticipations, and she watched with concern the rapid expenditure of the day, which, in the morning, she had thought would prove indescribably tedious. She inquired if she should ever be so happy again. This was the last day of the tournaments: the morrow was to be devoted to arrangements between

the King and his barons, and after then,— dreadful thought ! Surrey had intimated that he should claim the contract. In the interim, what could she resolve to do ? Confide her woes to the paternal bosom, and own her invincible disgust to Surrey ! Her father was all wisdom, all goodness. If he determined that the engagement was obligatory, one method would cancel it : taking the veil superseded all other vows ; but if a papal dispensation might set her free, she would willingly purchase it with half her dowry. Absorbed in thought, with the usual improvidence of exquisite feeling, the highly seasoned cup of joy lost its relish, from anticipation of the future bitter potion.

The sprightly minstrelsy had summoned her gay companions to the dance, when her stupor was interrupted by Lancaster's asking her permission to fulfil the trust consigned him by Lord Surrey. She complied in silence ; and,

as if spell-bound by that name, danced ill, and in evident depression. The evening was chiefly devoted to conversation. She was in a suitable train of thought to accord with her companion's censures, at this unseasonable prodigality of expence and time; and Lancaster, mistaking a sudden start of spleen for congeniality of temper, still more lamented the perverse destination which had bound her to another. He drew a picture of what he conceived true happiness, in opposition to what is termed pleasure. It was calm, beneyolent, social, enlightened, and domestic, such as his mother enjoyed with her fair charge at Kenilworth. "Happy Matilda!" exclaimed Alicia; and after she had uttered the words, was mortified at their resemblance to the ejaculation of Lancaster.

But was this bright vision of happiness, drawn with such delicate touches, only a

fairy palace ; or was it the habitation in which the painter wished to pass his days ? The crusader's cross was still on his arm, and underneath the plumes in his cap of estate, the escallop shell was conspicuous. But many barons assumed these symbols, who yet were diverted from visiting Palestine. In conversation with the Queen, he defended the Knights Templars ; but that might only be from justice to, and generous pity for a barbarously persecuted order. Surely a man so formed to improve and adorn society, would not renounce it except from some severe disappointment in the tender passion. That cause, and not the patriot's or the general's wrongs, must have moved him to say, that he was an insulated man, with no other ties than the universal one of love to his species and his country. Were this the case, why did she say " Happy Matilda ? "

These thoughts accompanied Alicia to

her chamber, where, determined on appealing to her father's love, she sat impatient for the dawning day; but ere its appearance, Beatrice rushed into her room, and informed her that the Earl of Lincoln was dying. The affectionate daughter stopped for no further intelligence, but flew to his quarters, and was rewarded by hearing that he was revived. He had been closeted, they said, with Father Ambrose, who brought some heavy tidings; the Earl was heard to say that he should not long survive the blow, and then sunk into a state of temporary insensibility, from which he had just recovered, and asked for his sole remaining comfort, his most precious Alicia.

It is now necessary to look back and describe circumstances intimately connected with this history.



CHAP. VIII.

Combining priests from many an ancient tale
 Wove for their use religion's hallow'd veil ;
 A wond'rous texture, supple, rich, and broad,
 To cozen folly, and to shelter fraud.
 For in the magic web was every charm,
 To awe the feeble, or the bold disarm ;
 To win from easy faith a blind esteem,
 And lull devotion in a constant dream ;
 This as her cestus Superstition wore.

HAYLEY.

WE left the Countess of Lincoln, her son, and her confessor, with their suite, performing a routine of pilgrimages. The anxious mother had prostrated herself at every shrine famous for miracles, and had sent her offerings to every convent, the sound of whose bells greeted her on her journey. Beside, she had purchased a vast hoard of bones, teeth, rags, and other apparent trumpery, precious relics all, and disposed them around

the person of her son, who had been dipped in Saint Winifred's well seven times, and suffered to lie all night in the stone grotto of Saint Bruno. By all these means, Lady Margaret believed him to be cured of a disease with which she had suspected him to be threatened; and as the mountain-air, exercise, relaxation from enfeebling austerities and rigid study, had given the warm glow of health to his features, she concluded her prayers were heard, and determined (as her perambulatory duties were finished) to repose, after her fatigues, at Denbigh. That town, with its demesnes, had been bestowed on her husband by the late King, in reward of his services in the Welsh wars; and on this scite he had nearly completed a castle, the magnificence of which threatened to eclipse Conway and Caernarvon, those horns of Wales, by which the first Edward threatened to fasten on and subdue the in-

tractable mountaineers. The edifice was in sufficient forwardness to enable Lady Margaret (with that mixture of bounty and superstition that marked her character) to spread her plenteous board for all who, like herself, had discharged the obligations of supererogatory vows. The conscious satisfaction of having added to that bank of merit which was at the disposal of the church ; her hope of having her name enrolled among canonized worthies, immortalized in legends, and the possession of a hoard of amulets and charms, to drive away bad spirits, and disarm sorcerers, gave such a flow to her spirits, as encouraged her to depart from her usual spare diet, and partake of the feast she had prepared. Instead of officiating in her usual character of servitor, she covered her sackcloth vest with an ermine mantle, assumed her coronet, and took her place beneath the state canopy. Her indigent travel-

worn guests crowded the tables ; they were such as it required no solicitude to please, being ever ready to repay her good cheer with the delightful music of praise and intercessory prayer.

The repast ended, the pilgrims repeated their adventures, and extolled the glories and wonders of the shrines they had respectively visited. Human nature, though differently modified by fashion, shews, in all ages and conditions, the same propensities. The merits of the respective patron-saints being equally identified with self-importance, occasioned as warm disputes among our ancestors as those of political leaders, or favourite preachers do in the present times. They who had gone far to offer a taper, or kiss a relic, at the chapel of our lady of Loretto, or St. Denys, despised the indolent worshipper, whose piety had been crippled by a bare-footed trudge to Saint Thomas a Becket, or worn out by

following the wanderings of Saint Cuthbert. It was in vain to plead, that rising out of his coffin, when he had been stabbed to the heart, lighting the tapers at his own funeral, and after blessing the people, quietly lying down again, to be buried, (all which was certainly done by the saint of Canterbury,) was as extraordinary as carrying his own head three miles after his martyrdom, which had been accomplished by the champion of France; or that the fastidiousness of the northern apostle, about his place of interment, shewed as great delicacy of sentiment as the leaps and jumps of the Santa Casa. Opposed to patriotic veneration, for the canonized worth that was the native growth of our own island, was placed the consequence derived from longer journies, and greater perils; for in mechanical exertion and bodily endurance, the merit of travel was then thought to consist.

To soften the asperity of doughty disputants, inflamed by the free circulation of the spiced-wassail bowl, the Countess permitted the representation of one of those mysteries which were the rude parents of the present drama. Our enlightened age would justly reprobate the indecent mixture of the sublimest Christian doctrines with gross wit and coarse buffoonery; but in those days the fervour of religion was not thought to be damped, by lightly treating the most awful subjects. Father Ambrose was by his office the composer of all the moralities and mysteries, which at times of high festival, regaled his devout lady. The actors belonged to the domestic staff, and the costume of the stage suited the composition and the performers. The profane deities, who presided over wit, music, and poetry, (objects of peculiar abhorrence to the confessor,) never contaminated his consecrated stage. The

legend of Saint Dunstan formed the entertainment of this evening ; the hide of the bullock which had been slaughtered to feed the guests, furnished a proper attire for the representative of the prince of darkness, of whose strength, degradation, and malice, (as he announced in a prologue,) the horns, tail, and hoofs were apt symbols. Thus attired and attended by the seven cardinal vices, the fiend visited the cell of Saint Dunstan, whom his companions tempted successively with flaggons of ale, fair damsels, tinsel crowns, and purses of money. The reception Lucifer met with is well known ; the prototype of the holy ascetic, after converting the vices, and setting them to build a monastery, led the roaring demon round the hall, to the infinite delight of the drunken pilgrims, who testified their hostility to Satan, by the practical jests which they showered on his ill-fated proxy, who was at last com-

pelled to cease roaring like an evil spirit, and protest that his torment was more than flesh and blood could endure.

In the midst of this scene, a plaintive voice sounded at the gate ; the night was dark and rainy, and a blind harper, with his young guide, craved admittance. That charity which the Countess showered so liberally on all over whom holy church spread its sanctifying pall, was withheld from this species of itinerants, whom she considered as ministering to riotous dissipation, and detaching the spirit from pious converse, by tales of love and chivalry. She commanded that the suppliant should be told that Denbigh castle harboured no vagrants of his description. " The court," said she, " is the asylum for jugglers and glee-men ; the King and his minion have stocked the land with these idle varlets : let him go thither, if he wants relief, and not apply to those who know that life

is too short for the calls of meditation and prayer."

"O, for the love and hope of that heaven to which your pious eyes are ever directed, supply me, gracious lady, with a morsel from your table, and allow me to warm my frozen limbs before your fire!" This prayer was uttered by a Welsh bard, blind and aged, who had entered the hall, under the protection of the compassionate seneschal. "Send me not from your gates," continued he, raising his hands, "this innocent lad will die ere he can drag me over the Clyde; I am no licentious troubadour, fattening on the spoil of England: I was born in these mountains, in the house of my prince, who kept his court in a castle which you may see from your turret chamber. The family of my Lord has disappeared, as the river Allwyn sinks into the earth, but his race is not extinct, and I linger in this world to see that race

burst forth, like the stream from its cavern, and overwhelm the lands and castles of his enemies. Then, O noble lady ! shall the son of Madoc remember your favour to his desolate harper.”

In pity to the old man's extreme distress, Lady Margaret at last yielded to shelter him that night, but required his departure at the dawn of day. Father Ambrose sanctified this act of lenity, but protested that the sanctity of his character compelled him to leave the hall ; and he enjoined the Countess not to permit the minstrel to play any hornpipes or dances on an evening consecrated to religious festivity, lest the same mischance should happen which befel the miserable revellers, who having profaned Saint Magnus's day, in the island of Shetland, by such an act of levity, were sentenced by him to dance for ever. Some hundred years had elapsed since this curse was inflicted ; but a pilgrim, who had

lately visited the spot, assured him the dance continued, accompanied by a terrible piper, whom he would not name. The dancers were reduced to skeletons, whose rattling bones made a dreadful noise. To avoid a similar fate, he enjoined the damsels and pages not to be too familiar with that stroller, on whom he looked significantly, crossed himself, and declared he did not like the appearance of his eyes.

The harper was pained at a reception which only relieved his necessities, at the same time that it cast a stigma on his profession. "This is not the way I used to be welcomed to a great man's hall," said he, indignantly holding the untasted refreshment his necessities imperiously required: "Has the noble lady no love for those sacred arts of music and poesy, which, as the best and wisest acknowledge, purify the fancy, and enlarge the heart? Can the heiress of the generous

Earls of Salisbury feel no interest in those strains which inspired her grandsire to elevate the red cross banner ? Is the descendant of Clifford's daughter ignorant that the songs of minstrels have immortalized that rose of the world ?”

“ You must not,” replied one of the attendants, “ allude to a parentage which the Lady Margaret incessantly deplores, and to expiate its incontinence, devotes her days to continual prayer and penance. She hears no music but at divine worship ; she listens to no narratives but the legends of saints. The Earl, her husband, indeed, has his minstrels, but our lady tolerates no fanciful conceits, that divert the fancy, nor love-tales, that affect the heart.”

“ But the ballad which describes the noble crusader, his fidelity to Saint Louis, and his death—”

“ All are now interdicted themes ;—since her piety and compassion have been

imposed upon by the devices of a lying wanton, she submits to the severe mortification of never hearing the praises of her grandfather, lest some admixture of a false legend, some allusion to a sinful passion, should mildew the chaste palms which shade that warrior's tomb."

"Still," said the harper, "she might listen to my only ditty; I have banished all others from my memory, and I will chaunt this till vengeance rises from beneath, or descends from above, to blast those whom my song curses. 'Tis no fable or love-tale, but a mournful verity of pity."

By this time Lady Margaret's female train, partly subduing the fears the friar inspired, with cautious steps drew nearer to the mendicant. The young heir joined the group, and while the seneschal was wringing the harper's dripping hair and chafing his stiff limbs, the lovely boy crept to his knees, and pressed his

wrinkled hand with his ruby lips. "Who put out your eyes?" said the innocent inquirer. "Grief," replied the harper; "blessed be that artless voice which accosts me in the tone of kindness." The seneschal whispered that it was the noble heir of the De Lacies and Longspees. "For whom did you grieve?" again inquired the child. "For infants noble and engaging as thyself," replied the old man; and resting his hand on his head bestowed a solemn benediction. "I would fain tell thee their history." "You shall tell it me every word," replied the young Sir William; "but not while you tremble with cold and look so pale. I have brought you a piece of venison and my lady mother's own spiced cup; I pray you take it, and it will comfort your heart." "I cannot yet," replied the fainting harper, "kindness cuts deeper than neglect; my Lord, Prince Madoc, had here one of his summer

houses, and his sons talked to me just as thou dost."

Sir William flew to his mother, protested that the old man would die, and soon brought her to his assistance. His disorder was not the effect of disease, but of exhaustion combined with agonizing feelings. His venerable aspect, and the ingenuous delicacy with which he had declined the cold charity that despised the sufferer it relieved, had induced even those who could not enter into his motives to respect his character. The attention which he received tranquillized his mind, his powers resumed their suspended energies, the tremulous weakness of his voice changed to the deep tenor of harmonious modulation; and as the kindly glow which warmed his heart spread over his features, his hand spontaneously swept his harp, and drew from it the most exquisite tones.

"You look cheerful now," said the

kind boy, who was still stationed at the harper's knee; "if you think it will not overcome you I should like to hear the story of the children for whom you wept yourself blind."

"It is never out of my thoughts," said the old minstrel; "and I repeat the ditty I made on the occasion every night before I stretch my limbs in my hard lodging,"

The Countess yielded to her son's earnest intreaty, and the minstrel sung the following ballad:

Part the first.

On the banks of sacred Dee,

Where through Bromfield rolls his billows,

Didst thou ere a lady see,

Mournful as its sheltering willows?

To the heights of Castle Bran

Oft her pleading eye she raises,

Then with aspect sad and wan,

On the rolling river gazes.

'Tis Lord Andley's frantic daughter,

Oft there vigils does she keep,

Cambria once she sold to slaughter,
Does she now for Cambria weep ?

She laments the babes she cherish'd,
Shrouded by the foaming wave :
Lady, where thy children perish'd,
Oft thy victims found a grave.

Think when, in the pride of beauty
Gaily sailing down the Dee,
Madoc's heart, seduced from duty,
Lov'd his country's foe in thee.

" England give me that fair maiden
And thy vassal I'll remain ;"
Thus thou cam'st with thralldom laden,
A jewel'd broach to clasp a chain.

Yet within the English pale,
Happy in his full desires,
Oft thy lord from Chester's vale
View'd the castle of his sires.

Glory call'd him there her own
Ere he form'd this curs'd alliance;
Now on king and England's throne
See it bravely frown defiance.

Seat of genius, beauty's dwelling,
Vocal once with Hoel's strains,
Birthright of his own Lewellyn,
Dinas Bran its lord disdains.

Spurn'd by the injur'd country he betray'd,
Betray'd by that he serv'd, sad Madoc dies;
In alien ground his royal bones are laid,
And drowning infants sob his obsequies.

Rend thy loose locks, vain queen of brief delight,
Mis'ry's pale vassal henceforth shalt thou be;
The river bore thy rose-buds from thy sight,
But English barons tore them from the tree.

The minstrel paused, and the eager auditory entreated that he might be permitted to proceed. It was feared the Countess would prohibit the indulgence; but the woes of a mother found a ready listener in one whose maternal feelings seemed the only vestige of unsophisticated nature. She herself signified her desire to hear the remainder, and as she spoke, the tears which copiously flowed down her cheeks testified, that since the narrative

was true, she was as much interested in Lady Emma Audley's sorrows as in the woes of Saint Ursula and her eleven thousand martyrs. The minstrel resumed his harp.

Part the second.

O for the ring-dove's piercing cry
 When first her plunder'd nest she mourns ;
 O for the mercy-asking eye
 The lamb upon the butcher turns.

O for that soul-transforming call,
 That strain the royal psalmist knew,
 When from the troubled breast of Saul
 Compell'd the evil spirit flew.

Then still might young Lewellyn deck
 His forehead with the wreaths of spring,
 And still around his mother's neck
 Might beauteous Gryffyd laughing cling.

But though their lust of power I saw,
 Though well their cruel hearts I knew,
 My harp forgot those tones of awe
 Which can the murderer's rage subdue.

It might have sav'd, though beauty fail'd,
Gay as the morn, as even mild,
Heav'n's menac'd wrath had sure prevail'd,
And kept from death each harmless child.

Wild from my harp the strings I tore,
And curs'd my eyes and curs'd the light :
The ban was heard ;—for never more
Has day refresh'd my blasted sight,

Since I beheld with arms entwin'd
These lilies floating on the Dee,
My master's sons ; — though weak of mind,
He was a gracious lord to me.

But she, the cause of Madoc's shame,
That Norman witch, that fatal fair,
That Emma, yet forbear to blame,
The fulness of her anguish spare.

On the tall Scaur with fixed eye,
Scarce by her maids withheld she stands,
Beholds the beauteous boys glide by,
And spreads her ineffectual hands.

Say not by friends the deed was done,
Nor name its price, ye castles proud,
For which to Henry's tyrant son
With vassal homage Madoc bow'd.

Thus in the hour when spectres reign,
Shall conscience whisper to her ear,
When in their dripping vests again
The spirits of her sons appear.

But if the sharpness of her woes
Admits one thought of Cambria's weal,
Haste holy angels and disclose
A vision her despair to heal ;

Her Glendore, at the mountain-farm,
Of Madoc's stem the only flow'r,
Protected by the faithful arm
Which bore him from his guardian's power.

How sweet he sleeps ! the wilding rose
Sheds on his sunny locks its leaves ;
The young avenger sleeps, nor knows
How sore his frantic mother grieves.

In mental sight I see him now
The dew from his wet tresses shake ;
The beams of morning gild thy brow,
O last of Madoc's line, awake !

Awake and point the blunted spear,
Try on thy limbs the antique mail ;
From earth thy father's standard rear,
And shake it at the English pale !

Old Mortimer now stands aghast,

Oft as thy early fame he hears;

And, like the death-storm's withering blast,

Thy rip'ning manhood Surrey fears.

At the mention of Surrey's name Lady Margaret started and commanded silence. A scene of inexplicable confusion ensued. The alarmed minstrel dropped his harp, feeling on his shoulder the stern grasp of the seneschal. "Why this violence?" exclaimed the old man, as he was dragged from the presence of the fainting Countess. "How have I offended? Why are the laws of hospitality broken?"

"Are you ignorant," answered the seneschal, "that the right noble Earl you accuse of murder is contracted to the daughter of this illustrious lady, who exercises the right of criminal jurisdiction in these demesnes? You must be kept close prisoner till her highness knows her mind, or rather the mind of her confessor, as to what shall be your punishment; but as

the holy father hates all the race of you, and is better pleased to save souls than preserve bodies, I would not have you expect any other favour than that he should shrive you himself, and give you absolution just as you are under the gallows."

"Does the father think truth deserves the punishment of death?" inquired the harper.

"Do'nt name the word truth," answered the seneschal, "or you will not get Christian burial. He forswore her fifty years ago, and that's the only oath he has ever kept; but the worst of it is, he makes us all keep up his quarrels. Whether you will be carbonadoed alive, or cut up into little thongs and hung up to dry in the sun, I know not; only as I take you to be an honest old fellow, I would advise you when you come to be examined, beware of the word truth, and own yourself one of the lying rascals who

invent all-hallow e'entide ditties to fright the good wives out of their senses; and then perhaps Father Ambrose will take you into his service to new tinker some of his own worn out falsehoods."

"I know I belong to a proscribed race, whom your late king honoured by esteeming them the enemies of usurpation," said the harper. "I grieve for having unwittingly offended the illustrious lady who sheltered me; but as the present king has relaxed the severity of his father's statutes, I am not by my profession amenable to punishment; nor will the heiress of the Longspees attain the virtues of her race by punishing one who has partaken of her hospitality. Surely the honourable lady must rather bless the instrument employed by Providence to shew her the mine delved under the house of Surrey, before she fixed her own fair edifice by its side to share the desolation. This I will repeat;

I saw the murder committed, I can name the instrument, the motive, the man who commanded and abetted the damned deed ; and torture shall not induce me to conceal my testimony. If the lady wishes to hear no more, let her send me away unquestioned."

Meantime Lady Margaret, shut up with her confessor, described to him the horrid charge the itinerant brought against her intended son-in-law. The rapacity of Father Ambrose, or to give it another name, his zeal for the prosperity of an order which forbade the accumulation of individual property, would have led him to inclose within its unalienable precincts the united earldoms of Lincoln and Salisbury ; but he well knew that the spirit of De Lacy, equally prone to resist regal or priestly encroachments, would never permit (to use his own language) that a monk's hood should be hung over his coronet. But though the lands to which

Sir William was heir were thus inaccessible, the dower intended for the Lady Alicia might find its way to the treasury of Saint Dominic ; and to his desire that such might be its destination, may be ascribed Lady Margaret's unvarying wish to immure her daughter in a convent.

Father Ambrose was one of those austere bigots whom Popery, in its darkest ages, converted into saints. Early disgust at the world induced him to enter a religious order, and he chose for his retreat the decayed abbey of Bangor. Those ruins, extending for above a mile on the banks of the Dee, were inhabited only by a few gloomy votaries, whose manners, too unsocial for even the common habits of a convent, resembled those of anchorets, or the celebrated recluses of La Trappe. Here Ambrose fed the spleen disappointment had engendered, till religious melancholy combined with monastic ambition, and his knowledge of

the world being confined to the vast scene of desolation among which he wandered, he imbibed the notion that no service would be so acceptable to heaven as the re-endowment of an edifice which owed its ruin to the barbarous wars carried on between the Saxons and Britons in the border countries. The library of the monastery had been secured in a vaulted recess at the time of its destruction, and when it was afterwards discovered, the plunder was spared, either by ignorance which could not estimate it, or by superstition, which revered the memory of those who, in the heat of ferocious combat, had been despoiled, and murdered with unsparing cruelty. These manuscripts, consisting of missals, legends, and records, were the only recreation of Ambrose; and he compared the grandeur of Bangor, during a long period of ancient monarchs, with these tottering ivy-mantled habitations, which the owl and

the bat now disputed with a few forlorn hermits, whose silent meditations were disturbed by their clamours. Often, at evening, his active fancy depicted the potent abbot, whose life he had just perused, rising from some departed tomb, and requiring him to re-instate the inhabitants he honoured, and re-edify the magnificence he admired. Here, in the times of the heptarchy, a thousand monks were always singing litanies, or a body of twenty-four thousand religious furnishing so numerous a choir, who, in constant rotation, sustained the chaunt of supplication, thanksgiving, and adoration. Before he lay down to rest, he constantly visited the tumulus where the victims of Edilfred, the Northumbrian king, were interred. Twelve thousand monks, as the legend stated, were slaughtered by that bloody pagan, for praying that their heathen invaders might be vanquished by the Christian Britons; and his nightly visions

generally presented one of these martyrs proclaiming the blessedness of those who, by bold exertions in the cause of religion, passed to paradise without enduring the ordeal of purgatory. Thus, one object being continually present to his mind, Ambrose became so vehemently attached to this dilapidated convent, that he would have smiled on the rack, or triumphed on the blazing pile, could his tortures have reinstated Bangor in the glory it possessed when England, divided under seven princes, did not afford to any of its kings the power or the dignity possessed by the abbot of this celebrated monastery.

When the prime of life is enthusiastically engrossed by one train of ideas, the impression of succeeding objects is faint, and even the deadening hand of age spares the long cherished desire. At the time of the conquest of North Wales by Edward the First, Lady Margaret accompanied her lord, who was appointed its

justiciary, to Chester, and visiting the celebrated ruins, was so charmed with the sanctity of Ambrose, that she entreated him to be her confessor. The manner in which he exercised this office has been already pointed out. Indifferent to the good will of others, his spiritual tyranny excited that determined hostility which imputed to him vices to which he was a stranger, and which were indeed incompatible with his real faults. He was neither a private debauchee, a hypocrite, nor a gratuitous violator of truth and justice. Like most staunch partizans, he held all means to be lawful that were sanctified by the end, and all misrepresentations fair that expedited his purposes. He enjoined no severities which he did not practise, but he forgot that habit rendered those privations easy to himself, which those of freer lives found intolerable. Desire was dead in him ; social intercourse afforded him no pleasure ; and, as the

wretched Agatha experienced, no recollections of infirmity mitigated the severe judgment with which he corrected transgression.

Such was the man whom Lady Margaret consulted upon the discovery made by the harper. Holt Castle (the scene of the murder) stood near the ruins which Ambrose had so long tenanted; but he had no intercourse with its inhabitants, and only remembered its gay mistress once bringing her children to receive his blessing. He had heard that they met their deaths in a singular way, but they were neither saints nor monks, so that their fate was unimportant. But now his ardent wish to dissolve the contract which he thought bound Lady Alicia to the world, made him give immediate credence to the minstrel's story, and he bade the Countess to receive it as a miraculous interposition to inform her of a circumstance which would have involved her holy and

honourable house in the judgments which, sooner or later, always overtake the murderer. He then required her to repeat her litanies twice over, to offer six large tapers and an agate chalice to Saint Nicholas the patron of children, to watch till matins, diligently reading over the inflictions by which heaven has often discovered its irreconcilable enmity to offenders, and to commit herself to a short repose, not doubting that the blessed Virgin would advise her in a dream what course she ought to pursue. In the mean time he would sprinkle himself with holy water, and endure the defilement of the minstrel's company, to learn more particulars ; adding, that though the man was doubtless a lying stroller, his testimony would not in this case be invalidated, as such apparently unlikely means were often selected to compass a desirable end.

Lady Margaret implicitly obeyed ; performed her routine of duties ; and en-

deavoured to compose herself to sleep ; but the incident which had so much affected her, combined with her late watchings, and the impressions left by her melancholy studies, haunted her pillow, conjuring up the spectres of assassins and lifeless children, in all that wildness of distempered fancy which is more an indication of a pre-occupied mind than a useful directory to a confused judgment. Now it was not Holt, but Denbigh Castle that was the scene of the murder. A drowned boy was stretched before her, not Lady Emma Audley's, but her own. She screamed, started, sprung from her mattrass, and looked round her apartment : the child, whose idea was entwined with all her hopes and all her joys, slept calmly beside her. She impressed a fond kiss upon his cheek, and breathed an ardent ejaculation for his protection and happiness. This soft indulgence of maternal tenderness tranquil-

lized the feelings pity and horror had so cruelly agitated, nor did her hard couch and stony pillow longer prevent her from falling into a deep sleep.

CHAP. IX.

Even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
To our own lips.

SHAKESPEARE.

BEFORE the return of day, Ambrose visited the harper, with whom he now felt in Christian charity, though he accosted him with an air of terrifying severity, which he softened, on perceiving it gave offence rather than alarm. Truth has but one character. The stranger was indeed Prince Madoc's bard, with whom he had resided at the castle of Holt, and had seen his orphan children thrust into the Dee, with the connivance of the Earls Surrey and Mortimer, whom, at the request of their misjudging mother jealous of the

enmity of the Welsh chieftains, King Edward the First had made their guardians. The castles and demesnes to which these children were heirs, tempted the cupidity of the two Earls. A fair colouring was given to the deed; the boys were stated to have been drowned by accident; and as the race was supposed to be extinct, the coveted demesnes enriched the murderers. But it was whispered that the huntsman rescued the youngest from the waves, and nurtured him in some mountain-fastness, from whence, it was prophesied, he or his descendants would return, and die the waters of Dee with the blood of Englishmen.

The brow of Father Ambrose relaxed from its threatening severity, while Lloyd, with unflinching consistency, repeated the circumstances of the children's death. He, being the only surviving witness of those circumstances, had often, almost miraculously, escaped the snares that

Surrey and Mortimer laid for his life. The deed was perpetrated by command of the predecessor of the present Earl Surrey, but with the connivance of the latter, and for his advantage. His father being dead, he, while the ward of his grandfather, resided in Holt, and was so early depraved as to consent to the sacrifice of his young playmates, whom he led to the spot from whence they were precipitated into the river. Ambrose, at this recital, crossed himself, raised his eyes, and blessed Heaven, which had preserved a chaste virgin of the house of Salisbury from the pollution of marriage with such a monster. The conversation soon glided to another topic : the inhabitant of Holt Castle must be acquainted with the ruins of Bangor ; and the long estranged pleasure of sympathy glowed in the friar's heart, when he found Lloyd had been accustomed to pace its venerable bounds. The enthusiasm of poetry, though different

in its effects, seeks the same haunts with the superstition of the devotee, exploring the remains of men of other times to find the most interesting topics for the lofty muse. Lloyd knew the spot where the Northumbrians and Britons had contended, and where, previous to the battle, the Christian host kissed the banks, which immemorial custom considered sacred, and watched with impatience the swell of the waves, which, as they believed, predicted conquest to those to whose shores they most inclined. In his lord's house Lloyd had often sung this battle. " And commemorated the holy monks immolated by Edilfrid?" inquired Ambrose. The harper scorned a falsity, and answered " No."

The father thought himself called upon to reprove the pagan superstition of calling the Dee sacred, or of ascribing oracular power to its waters. " They have never," said he, " been

sanctified by the body of any holy martyr, nor has any saint ever sailed on those waters, as did Saint Raymond from Majorca to Barcelona, sitting on his cloak, without oar or compass, or again as blessed Saint Francis, who, though he preferred going barefoot among briers, or over stony rocks, once thought swimming sixty leagues would be a more meritorious action, and he was rewarded for his faith, being carried safe on the back of a dolphin, without so much as wetting his scapulary. I know some pretend that the coat which Saint Winifred annually wove for Saint Breno travelled down the Dee, but the pious virgin too well knew the value of good works to save herself any labour; so preferring the Conway as the further river from her cell, she always crept there once a year, blessing the people, and healing diseases as she went along, till she came to the middle of the stream, where she dropped the new coat,

which, knowing the way intuitively, coasted round Anglesey, avoiding every creek and bay till it reached Clynog Vaur, where the holy Carthusian was building a monastery, and there, leaping from the water, it unrolled itself dry at his feet. Now, as the Dee never was instrumental to such a miracle, beware, my good Lloyd, how you sanction the falsehoods of pagan superstition, by calling that river sacred, because an idol temple once stood on its banks."

"I have all true respect for holy mother church," answered Lloyd, "and will henceforth curse the waters which drowned those sweet boys, as I have often done their guardians. May the race of Mortimer be fruitful as a viper's, and nurse the serpent which shall first sting England, and then devour its own issue. May Surrey's proud stock wither like a blasted tree! May he live

to become old, helpless, detestable, pitied even by his enemies for his extraordinary visitations, wishing for the death he fears, while his spurious issue curse his indulgence of unlawful appetites, which, leaving them portionless, will parcel out his royally derived lands among strangers; and may remorse, which he has long suppressed, revive, when he sees, at the moment of his deepest degradation, the persons he has most wronged enjoying his agonies!"

The confessor's religion had not made him familiar with the divine precept of "bless and curse not." He crossed himself, indeed, and told his beads, but it was to prevent the malediction from glancing at himself, or the house of his patroness. When Lloyd's exhausted breath brought him to a pause, Ambrose assured him he would endeavour, to the utmost of his power, to prevent Lady

Alicia de Lacy from being included in this execration.

“ I have not done yet,” resumed Lloyd : “ these were the principals, but the instrument must not escape. May the villain who pushed the children off the bridge, where they stood to see the moriscoes dance, die childless ; and as he bartered his soul for an hide of land, may earth refuse to shelter the bones of his son ! I know thee for a suborned assassin, Eubulo le Strange, and by that name I curse thee.”

“ Eubulo le Strange ?” said the Friar : “ can you mean the father of the handsome page Lord Surrey recommended to our Lady Countess.”

A dreadful cry issuing from the castle-yard suspended the minstrel's reply. It was repeated : “ Help, help !” was loudly articulated. Ladders, ropes, were called for. “ He will be dead, if there

is not speedy help," said one. Another answered, " He has ceased to struggle ! who will tell his mother !"

Father Ambrose rushed out, the minstrel tried to follow, but groping round the walls of his prison, deplored his blindness. The agony of suspense was soon changed to the most bitter anguish. The lad who was his guide, hastily returned, crying out, " Dear father, let us fly, while the castle is all in confusion ! The child is drowned, the heir of the Lady Countess ! Never shall I forget his sweet face, as he laid his head on your knee last night, and looked up, weeping, at a story so like his own fate."

Lloyd clasped his hands in mute anguish ; again his grandson conjured him to fly. " They say," said he, " Father Ambrose and the Lady Countess will put every body to death, and burn the castle." " They will then put an end

to my sorrows," returned Lloyd: " I bring ill fortune to every roof that shelters me." " That is what I fear," replied the lad, " they will call your ditty a bad omen."

In times when superstitious signs and hasty passion, oftener than just reflection and clear testimony, decided the fate of victims, innocence was no protection to a person involved in the net of evil prognostics ; but misery gave poor Lloyd that indifference for life, which through disgust at the present, braves the future.

The miserable catastrophe which befel Lady Margaret's treasured darling was the consequence of that extraordinary care which seems to aim, by vigilant superintendance, to remove its object out of the protection of Providence. Agreeably to the domestic œconomy of baronial residences, a large well had been sunk in the castle-yard, and the balustrade not being complete, the mouth was covered

with a stone of extraordinary dimensions. It occurred to the anxious mother, while musing on every possible contingency, that her castle being crowded with guests, many of whom were in a state of inebriety, some of the apartments might be set on fire; and as unclosing the well-mouth was a work of difficulty, she ordered it to be done early in the evening, that they might be prepared for any accident. The aspiring spirit of the noble boy had reluctantly submitted to the precautionary restraints his mother imposed. Eubulo le Strange was his darling companion; and before they parted that night, they concerted to meet at the dawn of day, and fly their falcons at the heath-game on the mountains. Awakened by the delight of this clandestine sport, William de Lacy stole from his sleeping mother, and, flying across the court to join his comrade, fell into the well. Eubulo was the first who discovered his situation, and

gave the alarm, but, unhappily, too late to save him ; nor was there any evidence of his own innocence.

It often happens, that a mind which has long been the slave of fastidious apprehensions, receives an impulse from despair, resembling fortitude. Lady Margaret had now lost every object that rendered life worth her care. For her husband she had never felt any tie stronger than duty. Family-policy contrived the union ; their pursuits were different ; their tempers did not accord ; and she had long considered him as one whom she could only serve by her prayers. The like might be said of her daughter ; but her son—who was to transmit the honours of her house to posterity, her hope in whom had suspended her predilection for the veil,—her constant companion, her incessant care,—the object of those sweet offices, and soft endearments, which were her only pleasurable

occupations ; he alone, who could call forth a smile, or tear, not of bitterness, but of transport ! How felt this doating, yet abstracted mother, when, roused from her unusually protracted slumbers by loud shrieks, she turned to see if he was safe, who was to her the world ; and the next instant, climbing to the lattice, beheld him raised from the well a corpse !

How felt she ? — ask if an inanimate statue feels ; for like that she became. Father Ambrose, who undertook to announce the 'direful tidings, found her alike deaf to the circumstances of the event, and to the consolatory arguments, by which he prematurely sought to interrupt the dominion of all-absorbing grief. The stupor continued. He tried to raise her arms in the attitude of prayer ; they fell, listless, like her drowned son's. He stamped with his foot, denouncing the wrath of Heaven on her perverseness ; but the action

and the menace were alike ineffectual to detach her eyes from the spot where she had seen her child's body ; and her ears were closed to every sound. Finding that nature pertinaciously claimed her rights, he left her in the care of her female attendants, and joined the chief officers of the household, assembled to ascertain the cause of this calamity.

Eubulo was the first person examined. He stated, that at his first rising, he crossed the court, and hearing a noise in the well, discovered by the light of the torch he carried, that Sir William de Lacy was struggling in the water, on which he instantly called for assistance. " Why did not you attempt to save him yourself ?" inquired some. " For the very best reason," answered Eubulo ; " I should only have sacrificed my own life, without a chance of rescuing him : the water was too low for me to reach, and I had no ropes."

The reason why the child left his mother's apartment, where the nurse said he lay asleep when the Countess, finishing her prescribed devotions, dismissed her to her chamber, remained a mystery. A consciousness that he had disobeyed his Lady's command, which forbade him to engage the youth in any sports, induced Eubulo to conceal the appointment that tempted the sufferer to his fate. An opinion began to spread, that the old harper was a sorcerer. It was recollected, that Edward the First charged the Welsh bards with that offence, as well as with sedition and idleness, when he ordained the proscription of them. The remark of Father Ambrose, the preceding evening, was called to mind ; and the harper's being blind, by no means invalidated the opinion that he had bewitched the child with an evil eye, since it was proved, that as he held him between his knees, he muttered

something which, for aught they knew, was an inverted paternoster. Education has now greatly subdued the passions, and strengthened the judgment of mankind; yet the burst of fury, which still agitates the multitude, on the first discovery of a very atrocious act, may give some faint idea of the quickness with which a suspicion of the harper's necromantic skill was converted into certainty, and the supposed wizard turned into an assassin. The motive for his crime was, they said, revenge to the Lacies, for building a castle where Prince Madoc once had a summer residence. To doubt the power of magicians was heresy. Mercy to a criminal was unknown: the highest exercise of humanity extended no further than to defend those who were believed to be innocent. Eubulo, who could have unravelled the mystery, was silent, rejoicing in his own security; and poor Lloyd, with the precipitation of

summary justice, would have been thrown by the servants into the well, where their young lord perished, had not the friar entered at the crisis of his fate, and positively interdicted the measure, even on the plea, that the water ordeal would try if he were a wizard. The father vehemently asserted, that he knew him to be a true son of the church, no conjurer or inventor of ribald rhymes, but a faithful chronicler of events. The curses Lloyd had uttered against the murderers of Lady Audley's children were full in his recollection, when turning his dark eyes on Eubulo, and raising high his crucifix, he accused him of compassing the death of the Earl of Lincoln's son, with a view to enrich his master, on his marriage with the now splendidly endowed heiress, and commanded him instantly, by a full and frank confession, to save his body from torture, and obtain a hope of mercy for his soul.

The alarmed page persisted not ~~only~~ in his innocence, but in denying his knowledge of the cause which drew the boy from his mother's arms : his fear of the Countess punishing him for his disobedience, of which he believed there was no witness, induced him to persist in this culpable duplicity, even when he saw Lloyd on the eve of being sacrificed for his own fault. But, as if for the detection of such selfish cowardice, the cup-bearer had overheard the morning arrangement ; and Eubulo's leaving his chamber at an unusual hour, with a lighted torch, was a marked coincidence. Terrified at the extreme danger of his situation, Eubulo fell on his knees, and related all he knew, but a confession which had been anticipated, was entitled to neither praise nor credit. In vain did he plead his extreme dread of the Countess's wrath, the tide of opinion turned, and more circumstances were

made out to criminate Eubulo than had before been heaped on the head of Lloyd ; especially since the friar declared that his father had been the instrument employed by the Earls of Surrey and Mortimer, to destroy those princely children, whose fate their young Lord so ominously lamented. Ambrose further asked, was it not probable, that the man whose cruelty and lust of wealth led him, when a boy, to consent to the destruction of his playmate, would, in his riper years, attempt to secure a rich inheritance by a reiterated crime. Thus far was fact : he had introduced this artful boy into the De Lacy family, who there, by his blandishments and skill in sport, had wound himself into the affections of the young heir, whom he had avowedly seduced to an act of disobedience. No one saw the child fall into the well but Eubulo, who gave the alarm, and when help came he

was dead. Here was a chain of circumstances which warranted sentencing him to the fate of his imputed victim. Ambrose was, however, desirous to give publicity and formality to a condemnation which must evidently nullify the Lady Alicia's contract : he therefore commanded that Eubulo's fate should be suspended, till ratified by the Countess ; in the interim he ordered him to be bound, and committed to the dungeon, while he himself repaired to the chamber of Lady Margaret.

Though bigotry and superstition obscure the bright rays of our holy religion, and contaminate all her graces, we can no more compare the erroneous opinions and misgiving apprehensions of the sincere Christian, with the stubborn despondence and gloomy horrors of the infidel, than we can assimilate the dulness of a winter's day with the palpable obscure of thickest night. The Countess,

recovering from her stupor, astonished all around by her self-command. She ordered the body of her son to be brought into her apartment, and the immediate presence of Father Ambrose. He found her kneeling by her child, on whose breast she had laid her crucifix and relics, with a faint hope that they might be permitted to exercise revivifying power. She laid her hand on his heart; it did not beat: she kissed his lips; but no faint sign of warmth or respiration suggested a cordial hope: she lifted her enquiring eyes to heaven, and then, with submissive awe, told over her beads.

“ Father,” said she, as the friar entered the room, “ he is dead, and the blessed saints will not restore him.”

“ Resignation is our duty,” answered Ambrose with a firm voice, for even this scene scarce awoke human feeling in his frigid heart.

“ I am resigned,” answered the Coun-

tess, with a deep groan; " the world and my child have passed away together. On the same day that commits his corpse to the earth will I take the veil, in the peaceful walls of Amesbury. Go, holy Father, make known my purpose to the Earl of Lincoln; and tell Alicia de Lacy, if Heaven gives her the loan of a son, never to rouse the jealousy of Heaven by loving it as I loved this lump of clay, this beauteous master-piece of nature, now an helpless prey of the ravaging worm, and craving the covering of darkness."

Ambrose praised the Lady Margaret's determination, and spoke of a cloister as the spot where submission would be perfected, and grace improved into indefectibility. " Doubtless, noble lady," said he, " you have greatly sinned; first, by resisting your call to become the spouse of the Beloved; and then, by your great solicitude for your son. Even at mass I have seen your eyes trace his footsteps;

the idea of him distracted your devotions; and your offerings to the church have been narrowed by your fear of injuring the fortunes of one to whom you can now only give a winding sheet, a coffin, and a monument."

The Countess wept, and wrung her hands, alike from grief and contrition. Her eyes said, "Oh! spare me, in the fulness of my sorrows;" but her stern upbraider knew not compassion. "The delight of your eyes," continued he, "is taken from you; but the child was smitten to save the mother. Pray fervently to the Queen of Heaven, who will enable you to imitate the renouncing spirit of pious Saint Alexius, whose homily I will repeat for your edification. He was a noble Roman, and had long wooed a lovely lady, who at last assented to be his wife; but fearing he loved her more than her Maker, he left her on the day of their marriage. Subduing his own passions,

and bestowing not a thought on what might be her surprize and grief, he departed, without communicating his purpose to any one, and spent seventeen years in pilgrimages and repeated mortifications. At the end of that time, his beauty being wasted by continual fasting, and his soul raised by contemplation to a devout abhorrence of this world and all it contains, he returned to his father's house, in the character of a begging idiot, and was fed with the leavings of his own servants; enduring not only their mockery, but the affliction of his lady, whom he saw every day weeping for his death. He died at last of abstinence and neglect; and the church would have lost the advantage of his glorious self-denial and voluntary sufferings, had he not written his story on the scarf which his wife gave him on the day he married, which after his death was found folded on his heart. Such, daughter, are the worthy confes-

sors whom the regular clergy propose for examples, who thus exemplify the precept of cutting off the right hand and plucking out the right eye. Had you, when you found that your son so wholly engrossed your thoughts, turned from the allurements of his face, and abstained from his society, our blessed Lady, who gave him to your prayers, might still have spared him to your embraces."

Father Ambrose looked on his penitent expecting a submissive reply. Most truly might she have answered, "He talks to me who never had a son." Contrary to her usual custom, she dared to expostulate. "Why," said she, "if maternal love offended, did you not reprove me while I could have reformed my conduct, and saved my darling? Yet let your unswerving holiness take pity on a woman's weakness; deny not one solace to my despair. Suffer my child's corpse to accompany me to my cloister, and let

me inter it in the cemetery which will receive mine, that our bones may moulder in one grave."

" Oh, pertinacious adhesion of human affections," answered Ambrose, with the complacent gratulation of one insulated from all social claims: " did I not often reprove your wanderings, lady, when instead of listening, you laid aside your rosary, and only gave the boy a fonder kiss? But the loss of your soul shall not be required of me: I did my duty: I will continue to fulfil it, and set before you, in its full magnitude, the temporal punishment which calls you to repentance. Your idol was not broken in pieces by accident; it did not crumble to dust from inherent decay: your son was murdered by an agent, who was introduced into your family for that purpose. Avarice and ambition instigated the deed: the perpetrator was Eubulo le Strange; the contriver

John Earl of Surrey, the contracted spouse of your daughter."

We will pass over the first agonies of the Countess at this dreadful aggravation of her sorrows, thus cruelly communicated. The minstrel's song on the preceding evening, the horror of her night visions, and the implicit confidence she placed in her confessor, induced her to credit this assertion, and Ambrose trusted he should obtain her signature for the execution of Eubulo without any further investigation. But grief had exerted its usual influence in softening a heart which nature designed to be benevolent, however changed by bigotry into the facile instrument of cruelty. Though a bereaved mother, in the full plenitude of her anguish, could not refrain from signing the instrument which Ambrose presented, for ridding the world of a miscreant unworthy to live, she expressly forbade previous torture,

and again called the friar back, ordering him to give the unhappy youth time to prepare for death, and, if possible, induce him to confession and repentance.

The friar's activity in this business did not proceed from that innate thirst of blood which sometimes actuates a tyger, wanton from satiety, to destroy more than he can devour. It was his first wish to keep the heiress of De Laey unmarried; and he considered that the public execution of Surrey's page, as his instrument in a foul murder, must lay such impediments in the way of this contract, as the Earl of Lincoln could not easily surmount. The wise policy and independant spirit of the late King, suggested a law which forbade the extension of the church's lands, by testamentary gifts to convents, or by charities, from whence the ghostly attendants on sick and dying persons had been accustomed to derive an immense revenue; often denying absolu-

tion and unction to their penitents, till they had so imposed on their weakness and terror, as to persuade them to expiate their sins by bequeathing their property from their heirs, and appropriating it to the use of lazy ecclesiastics. To such a height had this evil grown, that as the property thus bestowed was unalienable, it became doubtful whether the spiritual land-owners, though individually professing poverty, would not collectively outnumber the estates of lay proprietors. By preventing these unjust accumulations, Edward alike secured his own prerogative, and the domestic comfort of his people. His strong mind despised the enmity of Rome ; for his vigorous administration defied the oratory of discontented monks from exciting civil commotions among a grateful and flourishing people. But the annihilation of this powerful instrument for the extortion of wealth, compelled the mendicant orders

to be more indefatigable in using less profitable means for the same end. The power of a priest in the confessional chair was still absolute, and free gifts might be substituted for testamentary bequests. Ambrose aimed at directing the conscience of the first heiress in England, and by that means of reaping a harvest which would realize his design of restoring Bangor, and founding a brotherhood of holy Carthusians, by whom, while living, his name would be coupled with their Creator's in their chaunted litanies, and after his death would receive canonization.

Eubulo has been spoken of as bound and confined in the dungeon, the access to which was through the common dormitory, where Lloyd and his grandson were lodged. The attachment of the old bard to the children of Madoc, his hereditary abhorrence of Eubulo, and the curses he had denounced, were deemed by Ambrose sufficient securities for the page's

safe keeping without an additional guard. But the feelings of Lloyd, though acute, were not inexorable. Pity was the native sovereign of his heart ; and it is questionable whether the vindictive spirit which prompted his execrations against the murderers of his master's children, would not have died away in a wish for their reformation, had the power of harming them been put into his hands. In the course of a long life he had never been guilty of an act of posthumous resentment, unless it were adding a stone to the heap which marked the grave of an atrocious criminal. Musing over the events of the day, he took up his harp, and attempted once more to invoke the long-neglected muse, in an elegiacal tribute to the lovely heir of Lincoln and Salisbury ; but the groans and sobs of the youth in the dungeon disturbed his meditations. He began the ditty on the sons of Madoc, but the cries of the prisoner

prevented him from proceeding. He tried to steel his heart against compassion, by asking if the page had the look and manner of a ruffian. The lad described him as singularly handsome, gentle, and attractive. Lloyd had been a lover of his mother : she had often praised his music, and while he retraced the pleasure he had felt at her commendations, and fancied the youth resembled her, an unnoticed tear trickled down his cheek.

“ I do not believe him guilty of murder,” continued young Lloyd, “ for I saw two steeds harnessed in the stable and the falcon gorged ready to fly ; therefore, father, Eubulo only deserves to die as the son of the man who drowned our young princes.”

“ True,” resumed the minstrel, “ the sins of the offender must be visited to the third and fourth generation. Kind heaven grant that none of mine may fall on the head !”

The prisoner's wailings now became less articulate. Supposing he might be fainting for want of support, the good Cambro-Britons agreed to bestow their morning mess, which still stood untasted, on his necessities. Their united strength unbarred the entrance of the vault. Young Lloyd descended, and found Eubulo with his arms bound tight with cords, and fastened by a chain to an iron ring in the wall. He refused the proffered food, but gratefully blessed the sympathy which commiserated his suffering. "Never," said he, "did I expect to see the human face again till the priest walked in before the executioner." "If you are innocent of the imputed crime," said the Welsh boy, "death will send you to paradise, because you will easily have absolution for a lie you were frightened into, and my countrymen doubt much the stories told about purgatory."

Eubulo solemnly protested his inno-

cence; and lamenting his approaching doom, with the pathos natural to youth, soon melted the heart of his companion to the most passionate commiseration. The page perceived the effect his eloquence produced on rustic simplicity; and complaining bitterly of the tightness of the cords, persuaded Lloyd to give him a little ease, and a greater space from the wall. Lloyd readily complied, drew the staple, and unbound the painful ligatures, when the ungrateful prisoner, with a sudden blow, felled his benefactor, and, exchanging his cap and cloak with his own, rushed up the steps, passed the unconscious Minstrel, and escaped a few moments before Ambrose and the men at arms came to hale him to execution.

The tale the minstrel told was simple and inartificial, but though it was confirmed by the senseless state in which young Lloyd was found, compassion was a crime Ambrose could not pardon.

He now accused them as accomplices, and worthy the fate from which they had rescued his victim. Fortunately the power of the friar did not correspond with his revenge, which was one of the evil passions his creed did not teach him to subdue, and Lady Margaret refused to be the instrument of his cruelty. "Your zealous affection for my house," said she, "transports you too far. All cannot reach the same degree of perfection, or submit the weakness of humanity to the imperative demands of justice. Perhaps, had I witnessed the cries and groans of Eubulo, and heard him positively deny the charge, even my heart might have softened. I might have said his mother will feel as I do now; or, I might have recollected how he used to delight the darling of my fond heart by his grace and agility. Lovely boy! how often, hanging round my head, has he said, 'Mother, give me some reward

for my dear Eubulo.' The spirit of my glorified child cannot thirst for vengeance. If Eubulo is guilty, a thunderbolt, a torrent, or some other unconscious executioner of Heaven's wrath, will be my avenger, and sweep him from the earth. There are even moments when I think it is impossible for any human heart to have been so hard as to destroy the gracious boy, who thus fondly loved him. You look displeased, Father. On my head be this offence. In the business of Agatha, I yielded to your direction, and the curse has not been averted: I have a daughter still left; and since my heart relents, and my judgment falters in this case, they who released the bonds of one that I reluctantly sentenced, shall not suffer. Give Lloyd a largess, and let him depart."

It was not the interest of Ambrose to offend his patroness by obstinate resistance, in a secondary concern, when he

had important points to carry. Her resolution of taking the veil was fixed; so was her purpose, by a malediction, to forbid the marriage of her daughter and Lord Surrey. She had ample demesnes in her own gift, of which Ambrose trusted she would (as was sometimes the case) retain the fee, even after she was professed, and her recommendation of him to be Lady Alicia's confessor, was a point of the highest moment. He obeyed, therefore; but before he bestowed on Lloyd the liberal benefaction which the Countess ordered, he endeavoured, by the alternate excitement of his hopes and his fears, to strain his testimony into an affirmation of Eubulo's being an agent of Surrey's, in the destruction of the lamented heir of De Lacy. Honest Lloyd alike disdained bribes and despised threats. "I need no ties to bind me to the service of your Lady," said he: "I have been more than sixty years a faith-

ful chronicler of events, and an honest servant, and will not now become a hireling and a libeller. I know not that the Lord Surrey continues to practise the trade of butchery which he early took up: his avarice may be satisfied, and perhaps he had rather now spend his ill-gotten gains with Satan's youngest daughter, Lust, than increase it by a renewed league with his first-born, Murder. And as to Eubulo, though he is a cowardly, ungrateful varlet, I had rather see him whipped by the beadle, for lying and cheating, than trussed by the hangman for what, I believe, he lacked the heart to do."

Ambrose reproved the minstrel's disrespect for the church, implied in the unceremonious rejection of his counsel; but in consideration of the profaneness of his profession, and the heretical obstinacy with which his nation had long resisted the spiritual jurisdiction of the Pope, permitted him to receive an unconditional

giff. The funeral pomp soon left the castle. A true, and never-to-be-comforted mourner in appearance, and in heart, the Countess of Lincoln, Chester, and Salisbury, followed the corpse of her son, during its long journey from Wales to Wiltshire; where within the walls of Amesbury, the asylum of so many royal and noble votresses, who had discovered how insufficient was worldly greatness, to satisfy the cravings of the immortal soul, she hoped to end her days in complete renunciation of the world, and uninterrupted devotion. She was followed, in all the counties through which she passed, by the praises and blessings of the poor, and of the regular clergy; for the fame of her alms deeds, and devout exercises, had spread over England,—and great was the wonder why such heavy judgments fell on so excellent a lady.

At the same time, Father Ambrose

and the Welsh Harper left Denbigh Castle, charged with heavy tidings to the Earl of Lincoln. These were, the seclusion of his wife, the death of his son, and the horrid accusation of infanticide against his son-in-law, preferred by a man of unshaken veracity, who witnessed the fact. The friar was charged also with a valedictory epistle from Lady Margaret, containing her reasons for abrogating the vows which she entered into with a view that Providence had frustrated, and by a severe judgment had warned her no longer to delay that act of self-dedication, to which she had been early called, since its further suspension would doubtless call down judgments on all her connexions. Of her lord she took a solemn farewell; thanked him, in the customary style, for every mark of his regard, and implored the pardon she freely offered for their mutual faults. She expressed a hope,

that the peace and blessedness she was going to enjoy in her convent, would abate his solicitude for the concerns of a stormy, unsatisfactory world, and speedily induce him to prefer a similar retreat. Finally, she conjured him to confirm her full possession of her dower, and to appoint the holy Father Ambrose confessor to her daughter, as a sure means of preserving her from the contaminating vices incident to high stations. The unfortunate circumstance of her being the sole heiress of vast possessions, would, she feared, be an insurmountable obstacle to the holy dedication she had long wished; but if the Earl positively refused to bestow his patrimony on the endowment of asylums for piety, and Alicia must become the victim of human ordinances, by every regard to fame, decency, and happiness, by the souls of their honourable ancestors, the murdered sons of Madoc, and their dear child, so

prematurely torn from them, by their hope of heaven and dread of her severe and never-to-be-recalled malediction; she adjured and commanded the Earl and his daughter to dissolve the contract with the abhorred and abandoned Earl of Surrey.



CHAP. X.

We leave the summary of all our griefs,
 When time shall serve, to shew in articles;
 Which long ere this we offered to the king,
 And might by no suit gain our audience.
 When we are wrong'd and would unfold our griefs,
 We are deny'd access unto his person,
 Ev'n by those men who most have done us wrong.

SHAKESPEARE.

WE will spare the reader a minute description of the effect which the intelligence of his son's death had on the Earl of Lincoln. Paternal tenderness can fill up the chasm, suggesting the image of infant attractions, chilled by the arrest of death. Disappointed hope may picture a powerful baron, in the decline of life, deprived of the prospect of a representative to sustain his ancient family, and to transmit his greatness to a future

age. Such trials have been the lot of many ; but few could have suspected that the calamity would be precipitated by the cupidity of the man to whom he had betrothed his daughter. When his senses (which were suspended by the dreadful pressure of Father Ambrose's first communication,) had returned, and the soothing tenderness of his beloved Alicia, promising, by her more endearing solicitude, to supply all his heavy losses, had somewhat tranquillized his feelings, he inquired of the friar every particular circumstance connected with his son's fate. Though the zeal of Ambrose induced him to give too great preponderance to whatever implicated Eubulo, the strong mind of De Lacy easily separated the exaggerations of prejudice from fact ; and he rejoiced in the escape of a victim, whose execution would have impugned the equity of his judicature, and the credit of his hospitality. But the con-

sistent, unequivocal assertions of Lloyd, his firm integrity and affectionate sincerity, gave to his narrative a different hue, and compelled Lincoln to admit that the Earls of Surrey and Mortimer had disgraced their eminent stations by a most inhuman, unprovoked, and sordid murder.

Previous to the reign of Edward the First, justice had not so firmly established her throne in England, as to extend her powerful and impartial grasp to the mightiest as well as the meanest subject. The great barons, acting like petty kings in their own castles, exercised the power of life and death over their vassals ; and if the feelings of honour, or the ties of interest, did not restrain them from deeds of cruelty and wrong, they could defy the power of that sovereign to bring them to trial, who either had need of their aid, or who found it impossible to chastise them for their offences against himself.

It was the policy of that prince when he firmly grasped the sceptre, after a century of civil contention, to curb without offending these demi-monarchs, and to direct their impetuous tempers to some glorious aim which might produce national advantage; thus changing ferocity into magnanimity. The general tenor of his laws operated to exalt the middle class of society; he strengthened the hands of the judges, and maintained the rigorous execution of equal laws. But clemency to those who resisted his designs cannot be ranked among his virtues; perhaps we shall in vain seek for it in the leading characters of his age. Injustice is not a sufficiently strong term of opprobrium, for his unwarrantable perversion of the law of nations in cutting off the royal family of Wales, and dooming the brave assertor of the independence of Scotland to the death of a traitor. The Prince, who on that occasion forgot the claims

which a brave enemy had upon his honour, certainly descended beneath that low standard of humanity which, even then, sometimes prompted the victorious chieftain to forget the injuries he had received from his captive, in admiration of his bravery. We must suffer these stigmas to remain on the memory of a prince whom, for many reasons, England must hold in peculiar reverence; and observe, that he who wrested the laws to condemn the Prince of Wales and the champion of Scotland as traitors, would not be rigidly inquisitive into the cause of two children's death, sprung from a race likely to dispute the title of his posterity to a principality, when that event transferred their private estates to two barons, particularly high in his confidence and favour.

Nor again was public opinion then so generally actuated by the principles of benevolence and equity, which cause is

now become a voluntary champion on the side of the oppressed. Law had not had time to ameliorate the barbarism which civil discord had engrafted on feudal manners. To crush the cockatrice in its shell, and to exterminate the enemy whom they could not conciliate, even if these ends were accomplished by unjustifiable means, formed too important a feature of general policy, to permit the cruel guardians in question to receive that punishment of general opprobrium which would now be part of their righteous punishment. And though chivalry and religion had interposed to soften the stern features of the age, the former rather introduced the stately blandishments of occasional courtesy than imposed the uniform habit of cordial kindness; and the external ceremonies, which were believed to constitute the vitality of Christianity, never pretended to counteract the evil principle of self-love, or to melt the af-

fections into mercy. Yet even then there were some honourable minds who, rising above the common standard, disdained the base consideration of expediency ; and many spurned an alliance with a murderer, either from abhorrence of the crime, or superstitious fear of being involved in the ruin which, it was believed, the cry of blood drew from heaven on the criminal. Of this number was the Earl of Lincoln, and of all deeds of blood infanticide was the most abhorrent to his spirit. He readily confirmed his wife's interdiction, and heard with transport, that so far from constraining his daughter's affections, she joyfully acceded to a determination which she meant most humbly to supplicate.

Among the barons deservedly high in De Lacy's confidence was the young Earl of Warwick ; of whom, while a minor, he had the wardship. Reared as an inmate in his family, this youth viewed the

ripening beauties of Alicia with the admiration and affection of a brother, without that painful preference which constitutes love. He was also the affectionate friend of the Earl of Lancaster, under whose banner he fought in Scotland, and was so intimately acquainted with all the nicer shadings of his character, as to discover, since their residence at Wallingford, the alterations introduced by a determinate, but concealed and subdued, preference of the Lady Alicia. In common with all who wished the prosperity of England, he reprobated that nobleman's purposed retreat from public life, and thought no ties so likely to bind his services to his country as those powerful names of husband and father. Presuming on the privileges of fraternal intimacy, he had often rallied Alicia on her ardent admiration of a man who was so slightly estimated by her gay companions, and so indifferent to the opinion of her sex ; and by some de-

rogatory remark on the friend he revered, often drew from her an undesigned confirmation of the preference which she denied with a serious earnestness unsuited to her usual self. Possessed thus of two important secrets, Warwick was summoned by his venerable guardian to condole his afflictions and counsel his perplexity.

That a man suspected of having caused the destruction of her brother to encrease the dower of his intended bride, must never be the husband of the heiress so enriched was readily determined. The soul of De Lacy revolted, not only from a family alliance, but from any intimate public connection with such men as Surrey and Mortimer, who from the meanest private motive, that of avarice, could perform the basest act of deliberate cruelty. But the fate of England was at its crisis. These barons were high in repute; to offend them would probably

be to detach two powerful adjuncts from the popular cause ; to publish their misdeeds would furnish Gaveston with documents to disgrace the patriots. Guy De Beauchamp pleaded his youth in proof of his unfitness to advise ; but said that there was a man who had signified his wish of shewing his sympathy in Lord Lincoln's domestic calamities, if at such a season a visit from a stranger would not be considered intrusive. Warwick spoke of him as one whose opinion, if he would be explicit, must be decisive ; he being too wise to mistake, and too honourable to mislead. He raised expectation to the highest pitch, and then verified its hopes by introducing the Earl of Lancaster.

The illustrious visitant was warmly welcomed, and confidentially informed, not only of the conduct of the two earls to the sons of Prince Madoc, but of all the particulars of the young De Lacy's death. The aged earl, while bitter tears

rolled down his cheeks, swore that great as was his detestation of the usurpations of the Romish see, his earldom should rather become the patrimony of St. Peter, than his daughter Alicia should marry a man who, when a boy, contemplated his dying playmates with indifference. Warwick rejoined, that never should be the case while he wore a sword ; while Lancaster added, that if an appeal were made to that instrument, other swords would leap from their scabbards in such a cause, and as he spoke glanced at his own.

Warwick now hoped that some hint respecting the disposal of the lady would hasten a decisive avowal ; but the father and the lover were silent ; and their anxious friend broke the long continued pause, by proposing to bring forward Lloyd's testimony, and publicly accuse Surrey of the murder of Lady Audley's sons. But Lancaster strenuously opposed

so dangerous a measure. The barons, he said, were pledged to each other, and were on that day to declare what securities they required from the King : dissention between themselves at this time would be fatal to that sacred cause, which imperatively required her champions to cast aside all private feeling, and even, if possible, suppress the sensibilities of honour in an eager desire of general good. If Gaveston knew there was one iota on which his opponents disagreed, all the power of the court would be employed to fan dispute into discord. For his own part he had wavered long between his oaths to his dead uncle and his living cousin, but the King's behaviour on his unhorsing the favourite, convinced him of the fatal necessity to consider the former as positive, the latter as conditional. Surrey and Mortimer had joined the confederation. Both or neither must be accused of a crime which,

though committed long ago, was, he owned, deserving of condign punishment. Say that the unity of their opposition, and the probability of redressing England's wrongs, were sacrificed to a desire of appeasing the manes of Lady Audley's children, would the claims of justice be satisfied? How gladly would the King purchase their friendship, by an amnesty that should cover this and every other crime! Or grant they could not be bought over by the court, how would the favourite rejoice in stigmatizing two of his most active prosecutors as the murderers of infant innocence! The tone of public feeling was changed; the long incorporated Welsh were not now considered as a race of enemies; and the late king, while he had decreased the influence of the barons, had increased among the commoners the popularity of the crown. Let public grievances be first redressed; an army raised and dis-

patched to the north ; Ireland secured from the assaults of Edward Bruce ; the avarice of the Romish see restrained ; profusion checked ; and Gaveston separated from the King. Till all this should be accomplished he conjured the bereaved parent to exert a fortitude greater than ever the tented field called forth ; even to endure Earl Surrey's presence ; to be silent on the subject of his deep affliction, and, contented with declining to bestow on him his daughter's hand, sacrifice all private feeling on the altar of his country.

The Earl of Lincoln yielded to the advice of Lancaster, composed his afflicted visage, and took his seat among the convocated barons. Warwick admired his fortitude, but there was another instance of self-denial in his view, which still more powerfully excited his astonishment. He was himself a lover, and knowing the omnipotence of entire affec-

tion, almost suspected that he had mistaken its symptoms in his friend. De Lacy had confessed his perplexity respecting the disposal of his daughter, but content with interdicting her union with Surrey, Lancaster immediately fixed their attention on the alarming crisis of national affairs. Did this evince the engrossing avarice, the despotism of a passion which stakes an empire against a woman's smile? But Warwick was the slave, and Lancaster the master of his affections.

Soon after the Earl of Lincoln had taken his seat, Lord Surrey joined the assembly, apparently so overwhelmed with grief at the death of William De Lacy, that candour would almost have grown suspicious at the gross overacting of what must certainly be affected regret. He approached the venerable president, grasped his hand, and whispered something about filial sympathy. This was too much for the patience of a man whose



heart was already stung to agony. He flung from his caress as from a serpent that would have coiled around him, and sternly answered he was that day the representative of many fathers.

Influenced by the example of his cousin of Lancaster, the Earl of Gloucester also joined the assembly. The presence of the princes of the blood added to the importance of a convocation with which the King deigned to treat, sending the bishops of Lichfield and Exeter, the former the Pope's legate, the latter an exemplary prelate, to know their demands. It was not a party cabal, but the unanimous voice of the nobility, which required the banishment of Gaveston and the most prompt and vigorous measures. The King was more inclined to relinquish every prerogative than to part with his favourite, but the lords made his removal the determinate condition of their return to their allegiance; and to enforce it they

shewed to the bishops their armed followers, less numerous indeed than Gaveston's foreign mercenaries, but better disciplined and with braver hearts. The presumption of the favourite now rapidly yielded to terror, nor durst he stand the issue of a contest in which defeat was probable and synonymous with death. He even advised the King to submit to a power which could not be opposed ; and the Bishop of Lichfield, educated in the crooked maxims of papal policy, pacified Edward's conscience with the subterfuge, that extorted terms were not binding any longer than till he could extricate himself from the thraldom which imposed them.

The terms insisted upon by the triumphant barons were severe, and much resembled those resulting from the conventions that had been often held to correct the misrule of his grandfather. The perpetual banishment of Gaveston,

and all other mischievous advisers, was particularly stipulated ; but in concession to the King's personal intreaties, and in consideration of the favourite's royal alliance and services in Ireland, his removal from court was to have the aspect of being voluntary and honourable, by his being appointed to a command in Guienne. This gratification of his private feelings the King purchased by relinquishing all his public functions to a selected council, who were to redress grievances, call a parliament, apply the aids there granted to public uses, administer justice according to the laws of the realm, reinforce the obligations of the great charter, and for six months possess the entire government of the kingdom ; the King binding himself with oaths, confirmed by the most impressive solemnities of religion, to do nothing without their advice, and never to recall the exile. The Earls of Gloucester, Lan-

easter, Hereford, Lincoln, Pembroke; and Warwick were included in this council. Thus in a few years the heir of the mighty Edward was reduced to the mortifying situation of a state puppet, incapable of all but the parade functions of government; contemptible alike to his enemies and his subjects; and, what he yet more regretted, separated from the man whose extraordinary influence over him was, in that superstitious age, referred to the magical fascinations of his mother, who had been publicly convicted of necromancy.

Here may we pause a moment, and pity the lonely destitution of royalty, to whom prudence forbids the solace of equalizing friendship; and, at the same time, lament that perversity of judgment which has so often induced kings to bestow a marked preference, ever unadvisable, on men whose contemptible follies, or dangerous vices, have only served to render their

short term of aggrandisement destructive to themselves, and to their infatuated masters, by inflaming the rage of ambition, and quickening the activity of envy. Passing over a race of high-born nobles, stubborn, warlike, aspiring, and independent, Edward had selected for his companion and guide a foreigner, who seems to have been a compound of the libertine, the fop, and the buffoon. It could not be said that he governed by the ascendancy which a strong mind has over a weak one ; for though Gaveston attempted to rule a kingdom, his talents were only adapted to the management of a festival ; and he excited not the jealousy, but the indignation of the barons. A fatal coincidence of inclinations, a puerile attachment to those pleasures which, temperately shared, may sweeten the painful but glorious toils of royalty, and a total indifference to his duty, made the indolent King repose on the congenial

friend, who never waked him from the dream of sloth by the call of honour, till the cry of danger sounded full in their ears. Like the false prophets of old, he continued crying "Peace, when there was no peace." He called sincerity faction, and anxiety for the security of the country, treason. The jest circulated, the wine laughed in the cup, all was sunshine in the palace, and Edward wanted fortitude to look beyond its gay horizon, or to reflect that when a nation is not prosperous, not only are loyal men dissatisfied, but sedition and treason ripen their viperous brood.

The peers selected to govern the kingdom were called ordainers. Surrey's name was not in the roll; for though in the early stages of the negociation, "he mouth'd at Cæsar till he shook the senate," before the concordance was signed he discovered that "the King's name was a tower of strength." But

the same motives had the same effect on corresponding minds five hundred years ago as now ; and the cause of the people, or the rights of the King, have been used as the watch-words of party, as the flitting weathercock of self-interest veered to either point, governing the ambitious, the turbulent, and the versatile ; and then, also, men were found, who, folding the old cloak of staunch integrity around them, kept their eyes fixed on one grand object — zeal for their country's good, unmixed with thirst of profit, power, or praise to themselves. Every age has produced its Surrey, and also its Lancaster. But the versatility of the former must be explained.

Though Alicia possessed sufficient personal and mental charms to attract a voluptuary, and engage a genius, the vast dowry fallen to her by her brother's death, did not diminish her importance in

the eyes of a man whose expense had exceeded his rent-roll, and who was sensible that the alienation of his lands would abridge his power. At a private interview, which he with difficulty obtained of the Earl of Lincoln, he urged his claim to his daughter's hand, with the firmness of one not disposed to yield what he felt was his right ; and at the same time he frankly owned, that his former negligence, in so long postponing his claim, proceeded from his ignorance of its inestimable value.

“ Mean you, my Lord,” replied De Lacy, “ to tell me, that since my son's death, my daughter's dowry is so far enlarged, that calculating avarice wakens sleeping love ?” Surrey turned fiery red at the deserved imputation ; but considering a fierce reply would widen the breach he wished to heal, and betray the soreness of conscious guilt, he smoothly answered, that respect for the keen

feelings of a bereaved father, induced him to pass over this strange misapprehension, alike injurious to his love and the transcendant attractions of Lady Alicia, to whose personal graces, far exceeding whatever the most luxuriant fancy could paint, a less perturbed spirit would perceive the remark referred.

Either the praise of his daughter propitiated the venerable Earl, or he recollected the advice of Lancaster ; but when, building on his resumed suavity of manner, Surrey asked to be pardoned if the precipitation of ardent love trespassed on the precincts of grief, and craved speedily to fill the place death had made vacant, by a son of mature age, to support his house with grateful affection and determined power, De Lacy recollected the imprecation of his Countess, the avowed dislike of his daughter, and the accusation of Lloyd, not to mention an indefinite

sensation of abhorrence communicated by the suspicions of Father Ambrose. His prudence scarce restrained the gauntlet that indignation wished to wrest from his trembling hand, and he sternly bade Surrey reserve his love tales for a fitter season, and a more favourable audience.

This language was enforced by a withering look ; but Surrey resolved to understand it as an appeal to Alicia. He left the Earl with a determination to address the lady, but had not advanced many steps, ere he met, conducted by the chamberlain of De Lacy, the antient minstrel of Prince Madoc, a man whom he knew to be a witness, and the only living one, of his early atrocious crime. Blind, old, and friendless, this wandering son of penury had escaped the snares, and defied the power of himself and his coadjutor in guilt, to reveal a deed which, more than twenty years ago, “ the river swept to the briny main.” To

reveal it too to the Earl of Lincoln, and to his contracted bride. — What should he do? return and confront Lloyd; and by the power of his voice, if not by his arguments, overwhelm the feeble wanderer. That would be to admit that he was conscious of a charge, to which, by a voluntary defence, he gave validity. It would be better to reserve his eloquence till Lloyd's story was urged by the De Lacies as the ground of breaking the contract.

To his request to be admitted to Alicia's presence, an answer was returned, that her sorrow was too fresh to see a stranger. Undismayed by a reproof which spoke the light in which she was resolved to view him, his determined perseverance now adopted the only way by which he could insinuate his suit. Founding his opinion of Alicia not only on the letter which first roused him from the stupor of secure possession to the perturbation of

desire, but on her looks and sentiments on the day of the tournament, he argued, that probably her pride disdained the passive transfer of her person, and the only means of securing it, would be an act which wore the semblance of high generosity, and honourable confidence in native desert. Persuaded that the only man he could fear as a rival would never descend from the sublime objects of his heaven-directed ambition to any earthly alliance, he resolved to correct the unfavourable opinion she might have formed of himself, as of a sullen tyrant pertinaciously resolved to win, but disdaining to woo. He sent her an epistle in which he stated, that as a true knight, bound by chivalry to pay meet homage to the fair, he had resolved to release her from the vows that would bring her to his arms only a reluctant captive, the slave of duty, and would woo her with humble, steady, devoted service, till her sex's pride being

fully gratified, she should become the blushing votress of love. But though he left her thus free, and would only accept her hand on his knees as a voluntary gift, the willing symbol of a yielded heart, he would to the full front of defiance maintain his right and title to her person, against the changing purposes of her father, or the suit of any rival, even if he were the son of a king who should dare to interfere a presumptuous claim. Thus, with the mock humiliation of a slave, and the imperiousness of a despot, he concluded with protesting perfect obedience to her will, and eternal enmity to all her lovers.

Scarcely had this letter been dispatched when Eubulo le Strange, who fled from Denbigh to the protection of his hereditary lord, arrived from Sandal Castle, and narrated to the Earl of Surrey every circumstance connected with young De Lacy's death. On hearing that his servant had

been subjected to the indignity of imprisonment, and the fear of execution as its cause, nay, that his own name had been implicated in the foul charge of murder, he gave vent to his indignation in that strong language of virtuous abjuration which would have better become a man whose heart was indeed incapable of fostering such a black design. With real displeasure he listened to the chain of circumstances which had excited the suspicion, cursed Eubulo's folly for leading the child into danger, and his cowardice for denying what he had done. Alarmed at the prospect of his page's faults being made a pretext to break the contract, he at first resolved to prove his grief and attachment, by sacrificing the obnoxious though undesigning cause of this calamity; but as he stamped with his foot, and smote his hands, in all the violence of feudal tyranny, his terrified vassal grasped his knees, and entreated

mercy till he had finished his tale. He then described how the Countess of Lincoln and her attendants had been agitated the preceding evening by the song of a wandering harper, who described the premature death of the sons of a Welsh chieftain. The voice of Eubulo faltered ere he closed his story; but the conscience of the Earl required no more, his hand dropped from his half-drawn sword, and he sunk into the arms of his attendants.

After a temporary suspension of sense, Surrey again surrendered his mind to the dominion of a passion which, the less it retained of hope, the more it assumed the character of malignant obstinacy. He determined to persuade himself, that if he could gain opportunities of addressing the lady, neither the fables of an old bard, the slanders of an officious priest, nor even the imprecations of a splenetic, bigotted mother, would be insurmountable impediments. He was, indeed, denied that

intercourse which would have allowed him an insight into her character. Their first and last interview was at the tournament, where he felt the fascination of her beauty, admired her intelligence, and read in every glance disdain of his pretensions. This he attributed to resentment at their having remained in abeyance ; and he argued, that what had been long expected must have been long desired, and would, unless some happier rival interfered, at last be welcome. A pre-attachment was all he dreaded ; and he now recollected that Eubulo's long residence in De Lacy's family must make him intimate with its secret history : to him, therefore, he again applied, not with the stern menace of an absolute lord, ready to doom him to death or torture, but with the insinuating grace of a master whom he might serve and oblige, by divulging what was important to his peace.

During his residence at Pontefract,

Eubulo, the universal darling of all the damsels, had more peculiarly been the gallant of the fair, imprudent, treacherous Beatrice. These volatile lovers had met at Wallingford, and to impress her swain with an idea of her importance, and detach him from every rival, the girl imparted to him all her lady's secrets, not only relating the visit of the noble pilgrims, but, what Alicia believed unknown, save to the chaste moon and silent stars, her devotion to the Earl of Lancaster.

Lord Surrey's questions to his page wore the air of a man whose affection had not so far outstepped his judgment, as to induce him to compound his honour or his peace for the possession of a fair and wealthy bride. Eubulo frankly owned what himself had observed of a mistress he had long served and admired. Bred in retirement, affectionate, and romantic, was it to be wondered that she should discover, in an illustrious noble-

man who visited her in very extraordinary circumstances, a combination of every visionary excellence which her fancy had been long accumulating, or that the person whom she considered as a bar on the freedom of her choice, should be coupled in her mind with tyranny, unworthiness, and every loathed property that a young lady can associate with the suitor she dislikes. Such was the intelligence Eubulo communicated; and Surrey still believed it was all a trick of fancy, and that his own love of splendor, external gaiety, active habits, and enterprising spirit, would better accord with a youthful and flattered beauty, than the grave deportment and mortified manners of a man whom patriotism alone kept out of a cloister, could they but be produced in strong and happy contrast. He heard with pleasure, from the report of Beatrice, that neither the charms nor the attentions of the lady withdrew the eyes of Lan-

caster from his heavenward contemplations, nor awoke any perceptible emotion in his frigid heart. A woman so full of spirit and sensibility could not long continue to prefer this moving marble, dressed in the stiff drapery of a festival saint. Surrey, however, was not formed to wait the slow changes of female caprice. His course must be rapid, vigorous, and decided; and while he gained the daughter by his generosity, he determined to awe the father by a display of power. The descendant of royal Gundred was not to be criminally accused, nor coldly avoided, by the heir of the steward of Chester.

CHAP. XI.

If then true lovers ever have been crost,
 It stands as an edict in destiny;
 Then let us teach our trial patience,
 Because it is a customary cross,
 As due to love as thoughts, and dreams, and sighs,
 Wishes and tears, poor fancy's followers.

SHAKESPEARE.

AT the banquet, given in honour of the reconciliation of the King and his barons, the former entered, leaning on the Earl of Surrey's arm, and Gaveston addressed him with florid compliments in honour of the hereditary loyalty of the house of Warren, a virtue equally conspicuous in their present lineal representative, whom, with his noble brother-in-law, the Earl of Arundel, he was proud to call his friends. It is one of the evils incident to successful opposition to

the royal prerogative, however justly excited, that each doughty champion believes he individually possesses that influence of which the concentrated force has extorted concession. Surrey and Arundel assumed the state of those who could make or unmake kings. Gaveston took a larger stride, spoke no more of his intended travels, but whispered his new friends, with looks full of importance, and words destitute of meaning. The courtiers re-edited their worn-out jests at the ill-made mantles, and exploded manners of the rustic lords; and hinted that the devotion of the heir of Mortimer to the Queen, and the secession of the house of Warren from the popular cause, placed the King in a situation to deliberate before he subscribed to all the required conditions; while Edward, alike sanguine and vacillating, magnified the strength of his new ally, and insinuated a belief that he

would interpose his authority, to procure the ratification of the long suspended contract.

Lancaster viewed the scene with deep disgust, and observed to Warwick, that such gross perversion of principle tempted a sincere heart to renounce its loyalty. "Rather," answered Beauchamp, "let it bind you faster to the object of your dearest allegiance. My Lord of Lancaster, are you the only person in England who cannot see the value of the prize set before you, or the means of obtaining it? Beauty courts you not only by its smiles but by its dangers. From which of your royal ancestors have you derived this cold indifference to female charms; this austere contempt of all that the world counts worthy its solicitude? Shew me the Plantagenet who could resist the influence of love! Name me a knight of the house of Artois, who forgot its allegiance to persecuted beauty!

Awake, Lancaster, and bind thy services to England, by the sweetest ties that ever united man to honour and happiness."

"I know to whom you allude," answered the Earl of Lancaster, "and will frankly answer the friend, whose faith I have proved. My heart is not cold, nor is my perception darkened. When I first saw that lady in her father's castle, I was returning from a service I could not execute, in a state of the deepest penance and mortification, because a prince of Edward's blood had been compelled to appeal to the lenity of Scottish depredators. At the time when the freshness of my grief, as a defeated general, pressed my soul with an inexpressible burden of cares and shames, the Lady Alicia, ignorant of my rank, soothed my affliction with modest sympathy, and entered into the miseries of England, with a warmth becoming the

descendant of those whose blood had helped to cement our country's chartered rights. Charmed, alike by her beauty and piety, had she been free, and the British Lion reposing in honourable security, I would have loved, wooed, and, am I presumptuous in saying, won this spotless chrysolite? But was that a moment for me to become a happy suitor? Where had I left my companions in arms? Confined in the border-fortresses, depending on the severity of winter, rather than on the league I made with Bruce, to keep the ravaging moss-troopers from consuming their forage, and scouring the country to the very walls of Berwick and Carlisle. I was not journeying to court a generous and yielding maid, but to speak truth to the cold, dull ear of a flattered sovereign. The associate of my journey was the heart of my kinsman and king, a sacred relic requiring to be inhumed in the

hallowed earth, where it had often felt the generous throb of Christian valour. Was the disguise I had assumed, to hide my shames and the shames of England, to be cast aside before I had compelled the King to look upon me as the representative of a mourning nation? or, should the plumes of love be the appendages of the pilgrim's cloak, and the penitent's sackcloth? No, Beauchamp; I told my throbbing heart she was the wife of another, and I strove to believe that Surrey deserved her. I have since known him; I need not nicely inquire if the jealousy of envy has made me misread him; his actions have spoken too intelligibly for candour to say, this is a man whom virtue might reform, and beauty reward! Alicia de Lacy must never be given to one whom boyish avarice connived at consigning to a watery grave the destitute orphans whom his word might have preserved.

“ Hear me yet further: I own to thee, I love Alicia, and this sword shall, if necessary, maintain, even to my death, that she is liberated from a contract which entrammelled her person before her judgment could assist her choice. Here I pause, nor will I sue for her favour, while her assent might tarnish her fair fame. Posterity shall not blend the name of this chaste and noble lady, with those seductive beauties recorded as the disturbers of the peace of kingdoms, the dissolvers of friendship, the breakers of leagues, the Helens, the Briseis, or the Lavinias of the age. If when the concordance between the King and the barons is ratified, and each man, roused to a worthy consciousness of self-importance, remembers that England expects him to do his duty; — if a well arrayed band, under an able leader, sets out to beard the proud insulting Scot in

his own confines ; — and prodigality, and Gaveston are carried, by favouring gales, far, far from England ; — or even if, before that blessed era shall arrive, the paternal arm proves too weak to shelter maiden dignity, and her favour prefers me to be her champion, then, Beauchamp, shall this peerless maid be the sweet tie to bind me to England ; though I could not take a warmer interest in her welfare, nor love my country more than I do, even if all the transports that ever crowned domestic bliss made me no longer consider this world a wilderness of thorns, but rather as the outer court of heaven.”

Beauchamp listened to this full disclosure with a pleasure that did not wholly arise from his proud exultation, at calling this heroic lover his friend. His own happiness was intimately connected with the certainty that Lancaster's

pre-engaged affections left no chance of his hereafter becoming the rival of his dearest hopes; and we must now unravel the cause of his indifference to Alicia's beauty, and his anxiety to engage Lord Lancaster by the tie of marriage.

The habits of that age, alike pious and martial, induced an extraordinary respect for the memory of those predecessors who were celebrated for their devotion or their valour; and the traditional narratives preserved by every noble family, were nearly as copious as the records in the public archives. Through the claim of inheritance, from the celebrated Guy Earl of Warwick, the same high, chivalrous spirit seemed to descend on all who possessed that title; and his cherished remembrance was preserved, not only by the frequent adoption of his name, but also by connecting many striking scenes with his identity. Nursed

in apartments where the storied arras related his heroic deeds, or in a tower, ennobled by his fame, accustomed, from their childhood, to look forward to the ability of drawing his sword as the test of manhood, and permission to sit under his banner, as the noblest reward of their youthful hardihood, — the Earls of Warwick imbibed and transmitted, through a long race of worthies, that desire of honourable distinction which has blended their names with the most celebrated scenes of English story.

Close by the shores of Avon stands a cliff, still remarkable as the spot, where, after his martial achievements, the mighty Guy built a chapel, led a hermit's life, and, at last, submitted to the common fate of nature. Hither, with filial reverence, on the anniversary of his death, Guy de Beauchamp, in the early bloom of youth, came to make an offering, and pray for the peace of his soul. The

office for the dead was performed; the solemn antiphon alternately chaunted by the responding choir; the young Earl of Warwick, kneeling at the altar, deposited his gifts, and silently repeated the paternoster, while the priest, elevating the host, proclaimed the requiescat. The enthusiasm of devotion melted Beauchamp's heart, and after the service closed, he dismissed his train, and devoted the remainder of the day to lonely musings in this awful spot. "This place," said he, "is the seat of pleasure. Here are chrystal springs, meadows ever green, mossy caves, a soft murmuring fall of waters under the rock, and, to crown all, solitude and tranquillity*. Here, in a retreat delightful and serene, satisfied and secure, the delicious contrast of those rugged steps,

* This description is copied from Camden's *Britannia*.

by which he climbed the arduous heights of renown, my exalted forerunner prepared himself for that heaven to which our grateful praise now follows his beatified soul! Here nature, in lovely loneliness, revealed her simple graces to his view, taught him the unsatisfactoriness of worldly delights, the deceitfulness of friendship, ambition, glory, and even love! Here the long-treasured idea of the Lady Phyllis faded from his mind, and devotion absorbed every other sentiment. Here too, could I abide a willing hermit, and, contemplating the certainties of eternity, renounce all care for the fallacies of time."

It was but a transient fit of worldly disgust which drew from young Beauchamp the expression of sentiments, more consonant to the high wrought bursts of feeling which the imposing ceremonies of the Romish church is calculated to excite, than to his age or ge-

neral character. The shades of evening gradually descended, when he heard the vesper hymn to the Virgin, sweetly chaunted by a female voice, and presently after saw a lady leave the chapel accompanied by a priest. Twilight added to her attractions, gave sublimity to her air, and softness to her features. Unconscious of having any spectators in that retired spot, she had thrown off her veil, and the evening breezes tossing aside her redundant locks, shewed the solemn expression which devotion had left upon her countenance, and a cheek still wet with its tears. She was conversing with the priest, and Beauchamp heard her, as she passed by, fervently pronounce the name of Lancaster. An instantaneus revolution took place in his ideas. Solitude might, in declining life, afford a salutary balm to the wounds sensibility receives in its journey through the world; but he now recollected that

Adam did not fully accede to the Creator's fiat, or find measureless content in Paradise, till Eve, by her smiles, supplied that soul-satisfying charm, without which, even the garden of Eden was rather a fine picture than a full enjoyment.

Not presuming to trespass on the privacy of the fair devotee, he followed her at a respectful distance, till he saw her join a company of horsemen at the bottom of the cliff, and ride towards Kenilworth. He inquired her name of the returning priest, and learnt that she was the orphan ward of the Queen of Navarre, who, frequently accompanying the infirm Earl Henry in his visits to some salubrious springs in the neighbourhood, came, in the protection of his escort, to offer up her vows in this chapel for her benefactress and her family. "Did she then pray for both the brothers?" Yes, but oftenest and

most energetically for the Earl of Lancaster. "For what cause?" The Lady could have assigned a just one; he was her intended husband and a brave warrior; and the chantry of Earl Guy was founded, not only to pray for his soul, but for all who were faithful in love and in arms.

After this rencounter, it was no longer the sylvan pleasures of the forest of Arden, that fixed young Beauchamp's residence in his feudal castle; nor was it only in chivalry and devotion that he wished to emulate his great progenitor. He had served under the Earl of Lancaster; he was honoured with his esteem and confidence, and marvelled much that he had never heard of the engagement of which the priest spoke with so much confidence. As the friend of her son, he gained admission to the Queen of Navarre's castle, and had frequent opportunities of seeing the lovely, affectionate

Matilda, discharging all those domestic duties which heighten the witcheries of beauty, or even supply its absence where nature has denied face and feature. Love soon ripened in a heart, warm, romantic, and capable of lasting impressions; it was no breach of honour, as he found she had never seen Lancaster, yet it was rendered painful by a consciousness of the superior merit of his brave absent friend.

One evening as Warwick was paying his devotions in Guy's chapel, his orisons were interrupted by Matilda, who came, as she was frequently wont, to join in the service. The lustre of her eyes was dimmed with tears; Beauchamp inquired the cause; but, though she had honoured him with the title of her most esteemed friend, she would not acknowledge that they sprang from the expected visit of her destined lord. She spoke, and truly, of the declining health of her patroness, and the dangers of a friendless

orphan. More artless and ignorant of her own perfections than any rustic beauty of the hamlet, she had never suspected the existence of that passion in Warwick's breast, to which her dejection and lamentations gave so fair an opportunity of avowal. The lover did not permit it to pass unimproved; but craved to be her knight, protector, and husband. Matilda blushed and wept, professed disgust at the world, declared Warwick increased her miseries; she had hoped to have found in him a disinterested friend, ready to second all her wishes. His wife she could never be; love was the only subject on which she must not hear him speak. She believed—she feared this must be their last interview. She bade him farewell, left him, and returned to say, she should ever pray for his happiness.

The heart of Warwick was too sincerely attached to subscribe to this enjoined separation; and he obtained a

mitigation of its horror, by solemnly promising that the name of love should no more pass his lips, but that he would be the disinterested friend she required. In a few days he again visited Kenilworth, and found Matilda gaily smiling, frank and happy. Misconstruing the change, and knowing that she had, in the interim, seen Lancaster, he presumed that her satisfaction arose from every impediment to their nuptials being removed; and not from the termination of that painful struggle between love and gratitude, deference to the wishes of her benefactress, and a lively sense of Warwick's merits, which had so cruelly agitated her gentle heart. The apprehensions which flew from the tranquilized bosom of the maiden, were transferred to that of Warwick; and the playful ease of her manner, instead of renewing confidence and inspiring hope, enjoined silence and begat despair. The destined wife of Lancaster wanted no

other friend, and Beauchamp imposed on himself the solemn duty of tearing her image from his heart.

To facilitate this self-conquest, absence was indispensable. In a voice, tremulous from indecision, he bade her farewell. He was going, he said, to join the confederated barons; and, if there was peace for England, and war with Scotland, she would hear of him at the gates of Dumbarton. Matilda now turned pale, took his hand, and gently asked if she had offended him. What could she do without Beauchamp, her friend, her knight, her protector? The young Earl listened with astonishment. Could this be female vanity, artfully seeking to increase the number of its slaves? or was it modest sympathy, kindly endeavouring to soften the anguish of rejection? The latter conclusion best suited her amiable, artless character. He pressed the offered hand to his heart, and vowed no man should deprive him of the titles she had

bestowed. Yet, as he turned to leave her, a sudden start of wayward jealousy made him ask, why she required any other champion than the Earl of Lancaster. Matilda's blue eyes instantly assumed an indignant expression, "No, Beauchamp," replied she, "no request of mine shall ever offend the ear of the Earl of Lancaster."

Astonishing! Could Lancaster have slighted, nay, (for such her manner seemed to indicate,) have wronged this charming maid? Matilda would give no explanation; and from that moment, the generous, though still enamoured Warwick, laboured to convince his own heart, that it would be base and selfish for him to attempt to interpose any obstacles to an attachment so fervent, and yet so delicate and resigned, as what he supposed Matilda entertained for Lancaster. He came to Wallingford ostensibly, as a baron leagued to obtain from the King such concessions as might preserve Eng-

land; but actually stimulated by the nearer interest of reading the heart of Lancaster, and governing the impulses of his own, by the discoveries which he made. Versed in the indications of love, he saw his sincere, but subdued affection, to Alicia, whose lively admiration of his heroic virtue scarcely affected any disguise. To endeavour to procure the union of those whom love had already joined, was not treachery to Matilda, whose high sense of decorum would ever reject the vow extorted by pity. Cherishing a hope of ultimate success, and feeling no reluctance from wounded pride, at being the second choice of one whose first was the Earl of Lancaster, he would often say to himself, if I will copy him whose pre-eminence in fame charmed this fair maiden's soul, before her eyes could direct her heart. She was not won by feature or complexion; and if I become another Lancaster, her love may preserve the distinctness of iden-

tity, and she will see the man of her first choice in his faithful imitator."

It is nature that we aim at copying, not ideal perfection. We appeal to the heart of every lover to excuse Warwick, if he attended less to the business of the concordance than to promote a marriage, to which he looked as the harbinger of his own; nay, even if he did this, without nicely balancing, in the scale of his judgment, the dispositions of the pair he wished to unite, or considering, if they really were so well adapted to promote the happiness of each other, as their inclinations had induced them to believe.

We must now return to the Earl of Lancaster, who expecting intelligence from his lieutenant, at Berwick, admitted to a private conference a stranger, who called himself a servitor, from the monastery of Lindisfarn; but on throwing off his hood and cloak, discovered Lord Surrey's retainer, Eubule le Strangel

THE HISTORY OF THE REIGN OF HENRY SEVENTH.

He clasped the knees of Lancaster with the eagerness of a man imploring life, and, at the same time, only requesting that his protection might depend on the veracity and importance of his communications. These, he said, related to the honour, liberty, and life of the lady Alicia De Lacy. Lancaster was all attention, bidding him remember, that though he was not kneeling at the confessional chair, he was equally in the presence of Omniscience.

Eubulo proceeded: he confessed himself the unintentional cause of the Earl of Lincoln's paternal anguish, which consideration steadily determined him not to add to his afflictions by a voluntary crime. He detailed the circumstances of young Sir William's death, and thus exonerated his master from all participation, but added, that as the unfortunate coincidences which had connected his name with that event must make him hateful and suspicious in a

father's eyes, he could not discover to Lord Lincoln a project laid to remove his daughter from his protection. He knew the interest which the Earl of Lancaster took in that noble family, and on his honour and wisdom he relied; only begging, that when the plot was frustrated by the prevention he would point out, he might be received into his service; as nothing short of torture and death would be his doom, should he again fall into the power of his offended lord.

His eye watched the Earl during this speech; but the conclusions which the intelligent hero drew from this proem eluded the craft of Eubulo, who proceeded to state, that encouraged by the favour of the King, who promised to shield the act by his authority, and the revengeful counsels of Gaveston, who was eager to afflict a man by whom he had been mortified and exiled, Surrey had resolved to carry off Alicia. The

time fixed for the enterprize was the morrow, when the King removed to Westminster, to meet his parliament, and delegate his authority to the ordainers. The Queen had prevailed to take Alicia in her suite. Gaveston had arranged the order of the route; and it was settled that a party of his Gascon troops, disguised as banditti, should overpower the Queen's guard, composed of their comrades, and carry Alicia to a cavern in the forest, from whence she was to be rescued by Surrey, who thus entitled to her gratitude, in the character of her champion, doubted not but that he should either persuade or compel her to an immediate marriage. In the execution of this scheme, Eubulo was to be Surrey's prime agent, and command the pretended outlaws, that they might not mistake the person of the lady whom they seized; but he described the spot where the outrage was to be committed, and advised that it should be previously

occupied by Lancaster's men at arms, who, as the Gascons were not prepared for resistance, might easily overpower them.

The Earl of Lancaster was too wary to place implicit confidence in a man, who, by his own confession, was judged by those who best knew his character, to be fit to conduct a scheme of consummate villany. Suspecting this to be a snare laid by the King's evil counsellors, to draw him into a breach of the treaty so lately made, by the commission of an act of violence, that would tend still further to divide and disgrace the popular cause, he calmly advised Eubulo to return to the service of his demesne Lord, with whom he was resolved not to embroil himself, either by what might be deemed seducing a vassal from his fidelity, or by collecting and arming a larger body of adherents than their mutual agreement warranted. As to the Lady Alicia, Heaven, the laws of her country, the

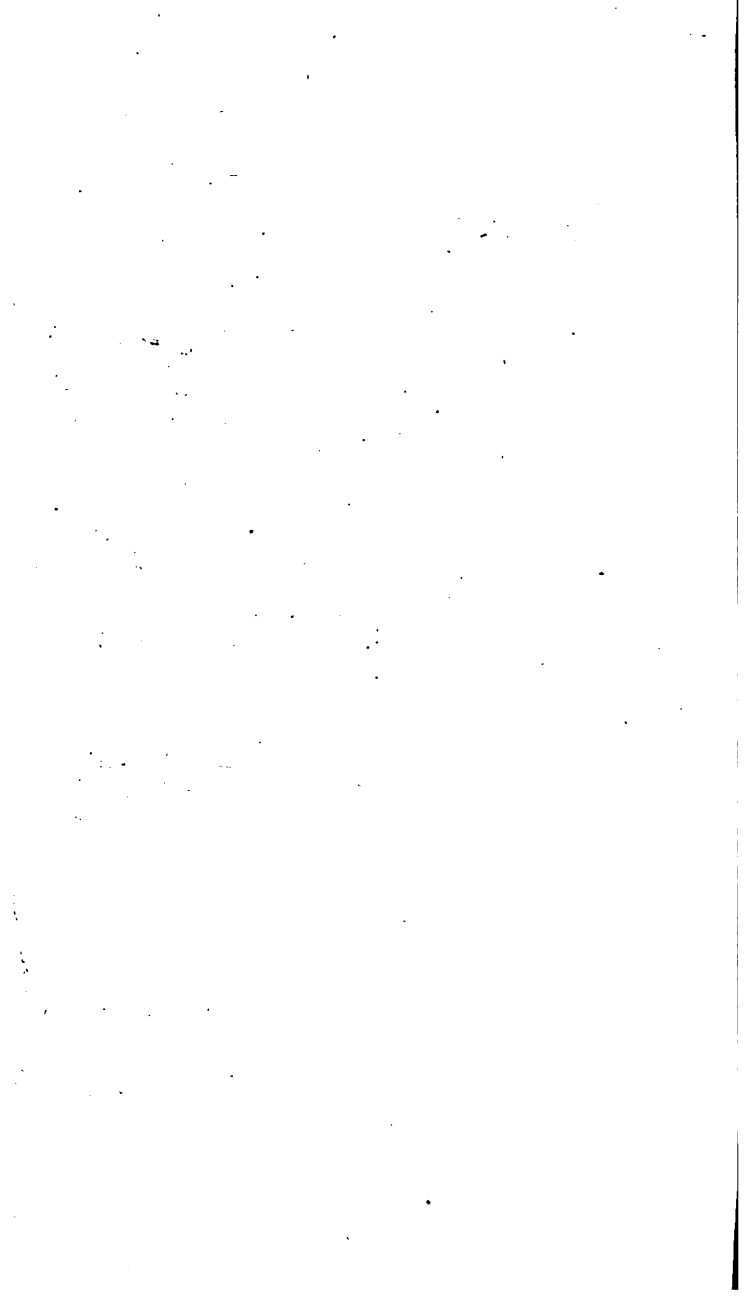
power of her father, and her own virtue and prudence, were her protectors. If others were wanting, he would ride by her side, and the ruffian ravisher must trample him under his foot, before he presumed to profane with his rude touch the lady he had undertaken to defend. He then summoned one of his pages, commanding him to conduct the servitor of Lindisfarn safe out of his quarters, and waited till he was assured no spy watched his movements, before he sought the pavilion of the Earl of Lincoln, on what errand bound, may be conjectured by those who remember that England was now at peace with itself, and Alicia exonerated from her vows.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

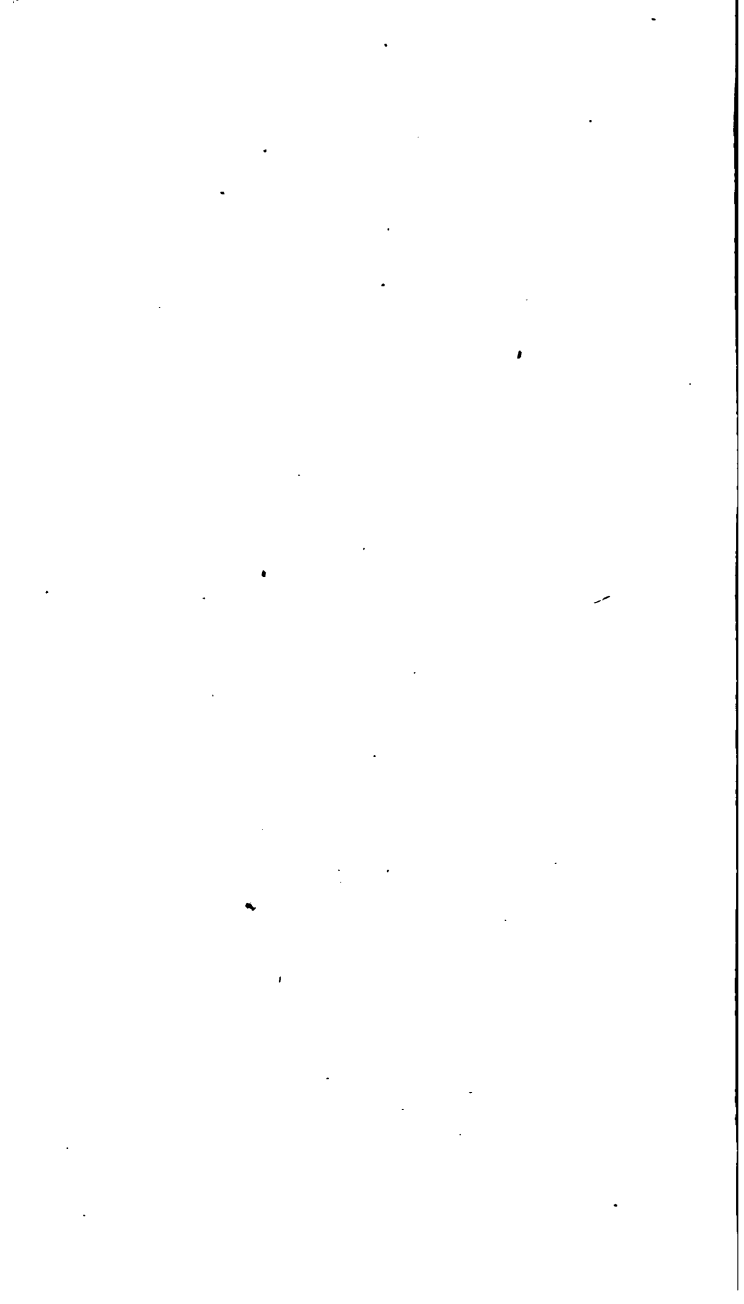


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